

ESSAYS OF MONTAIGNE, OR HOW TO LIVE

Coordinator: Ted Auerbach

The essays of Montaigne are among the most influential and profound writings in human thought. There are many ways to read and interpret the essays. This study group emphasizes a philosophical interpretation. What were the philosophical influences on the essays? How are the essays related to modern conceptions of the individual and the self? “As the novelist Gustave Flaubert advised a friend who was wondering how to approach Montaigne, ‘Don’t read him as children do, for amusement, nor as the ambitious do, to be instructed, no, read him in order to live’” (Quoted in Bakewell). The essays are also placed into the historical context.

Ted Auerbach was a New York City public High School teacher for over 20 years. His major area of study has been philosophy.

Readings:

Bakewell, Sarah, *How to Live: Or A Life of Montaigne, In One Question And Twenty Attempts At An Answer*; Other Press, 2011, ISBN 978-1-59051-483-2; \$16.95.

Michel De Montaigne, *The Essays: A Selection*, M.A. Screech (translator); Penguin Classics, 1993, ISBN 978-0-140-44602-9; \$17.00.
On Friendship (to be distributed.)

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For each session we read one or two chapters from the Bakewell book along with corresponding Montaigne essays for discussion.

Session 1: Reading: *Don’t worry about Death; Pay attention*. Pages 1- 38, Bakewell. Essays: *On Fear*, pages 13 -6; *To Philosophize is to learn how to die*, pps 17-26.

This session will be an overview of the historical and philosophical context of Montaigne.

Session 2: Reading: *Be Born*, Pages 39 – 63, Bakewell. Essays: *On the Length of Life*, pps 120-123; *On Coaches*, 330 – 350.

Session 3: Reading: *Read a lot, forget most of what you read, and be slow-witted*. Pages 64-89, Bakewell. Essays: *On Cruelty*, pps 167-185; *God’s Ordinance*, 93 – 95.

Session 4: Reading: *Survive Love and Loss*. Pages 90-11, Bakewell. Essays: *On Friendship*, *handout*.

Session 5: Reading: *Use Little Tricks; Question Everything* Pages 109-152, Bakewell. Essays: *In Defense of Seneca and Plutarch*, pps 186-193; *We Reach the Same End by Discrepant Means*, pages 5 – 8; *On Drunkenness*, pps. 132-142.

Session 6: Reading: *Keep a Private Room Behind the Shop; Be Convivial – Live with Others*, Pages 154 – 181, Bakewell. Essays: *On the Affection of Fathers for their Children*, pps 149-168; *On Three Kinds of Social Intercourse*, 247 – 259.

Session 7: Reading: *Wake from Sleep of Habit; Live Temperately*, Pages 183-221, Bakewell. Essays: *On Conscience*, pps 143-147; *Guard your Humanity*, 183-221; *On The Cannibals* pps 79 - 92.

Session 8: Reading: *Do Something No One Has Done Before; See the World*, Pages 223-244, Bakewell. Essays: *On Repentance*, pps 232-246; *On Three Good Wives*, 194-201.

Session 9: Reading: *Do a Good Job, but Not too Good a Job*; Pages 245-273, Bakewell. Essays: *On the Lame*, pps 351-363.

Session 10: Reading: *Give Up Control*; pages 290-315, Bakewell. Essays: *On Solitude*, 96-108; *On Prayer* pps 109-119.

Session 11: Reading: *Be Ordinary and Imperfect*, pages 316-320, Bakewell. Essays: *On Some Lines from Virgil*, pps 260-329.

Session 12: Reading: *Let Life Be Its Own Answer*, pages 321-328, Bakewell. Essays: *On Experience*, pps 264-426.