



Reading for My Life: Writings, 1958-2008

John Leonard

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Right up until his death in 2008, John Leonard was a lion in American letters. A passionate, erudite, and wide-ranging critic, he helped shape the landscape of modern literature. He reviewed the most celebrated writers of his age—from Kurt Vonnegut and Joan Didion to Toni Morrison and Thomas Pynchon. He championed Morrison's work so ardently that she invited him to travel with her to Stockholm when she accepted her Nobel Prize. He also contributed many pieces on television, film, politics, and the media, which continue to surprise and impress with their fervor and prescience.

Reading for My Life is a monumental collection of Leonard's most significant writings—spanning five decades—from his earliest columns for the *Harvard Crimson* to his final essays for *The New York Review of Books*. Here are Leonard's best writings—many never before published in book form—on the cultural touchstones of a generation, each piece a testament to his sharp wit, fierce intelligence, and lasting love of the arts. Definitive reviews of Doris Lessing, Vladimir Nabokov, Maxine Hong Kingston, Tom Wolfe, Don DeLillo, Milan Kundera, and Philip Roth, among others, display his passion and nearly encyclopedic knowledge of literature in the second half of the twentieth century. His essay on Ed Sullivan and the evolution of television remains a classic. Throughout Leonard's reviews and essays is a dedicated political spirit, pleading for social justice, advocating for the women's movement, and forever calling attention to writers whose work challenged and excited him.

With an introduction by E. L. Doctorow and remembrances by Leonard's friends, family, and colleagues, including Gloria Steinem and Victor Navasky, *Reading for My Life* stands as a landmark collection from one of America's most beloved and influential critics.

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