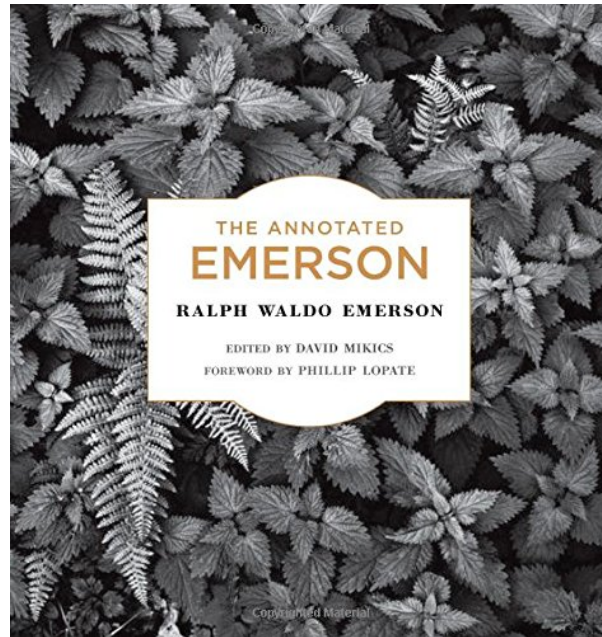
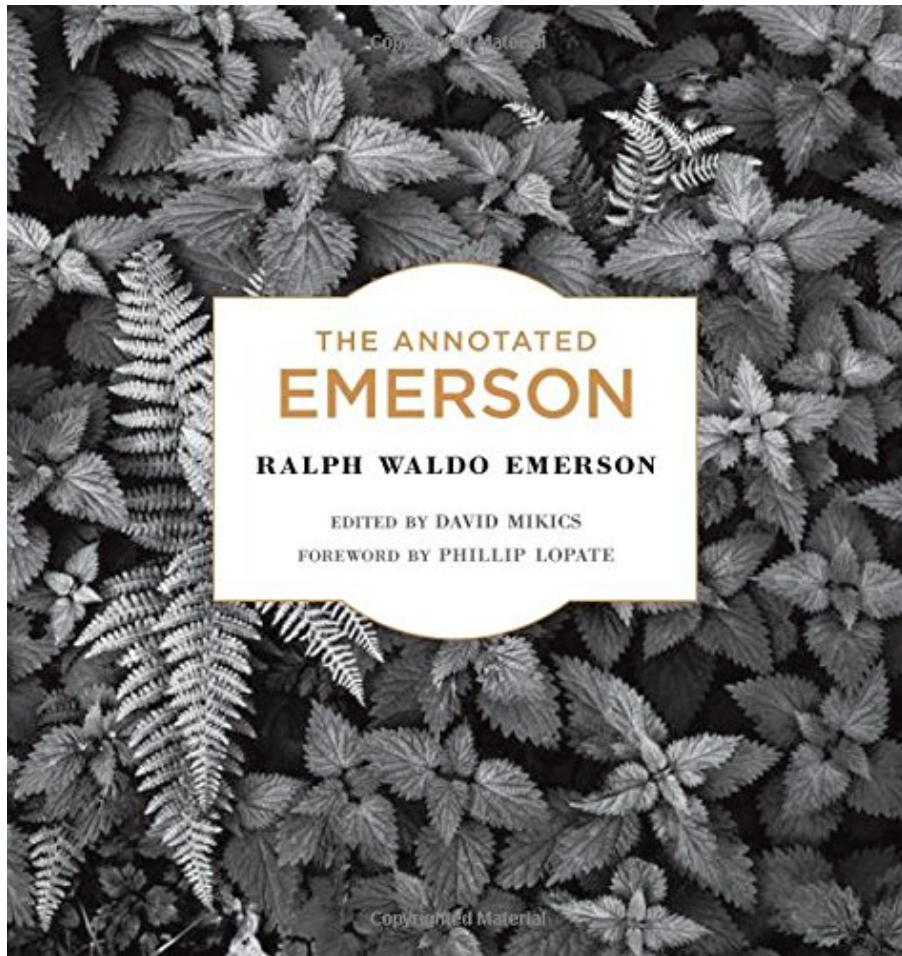


THE ANNOTATED EMERSON BY RALPH WALDO EMERSON



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A brilliant essayist and a master of the aphorism (“Our moods do not believe in each other”; “Money often costs too much”), Emerson has inspired countless writers. He challenged Americans to shut their ears against Europe’s “courtly muses” and to forge a new, distinctly American cultural identity. But he remains one of America’s least understood writers. And, by his own admission, he spawned neither school nor follower (he valued independent thought too much). Now, in this annotated selection of Emerson’s writings, David Mikics instructs the reader in a larger appreciation of Emerson’s essential works and the remarkable thinker who produced them.

Full of color illustrations and rich in archival photographs, this volume offers much for the specialist and general reader. In his running commentaries on Emerson’s essays, addresses, and poems, Mikics illuminates contexts, allusions, and language likely to cause difficulty to modern readers. He quotes extensively from Emerson’s Journal to shed light on particular passages or lines and examines Emerson the essayist, poet, itinerant lecturer, and political activist. Finally, in his Foreword, Phillip Lopate makes the case for Emerson as a spectacular truth teller—a model of intellectual labor and anti-dogmatic sanity.

Anyone who values Emerson will want to own this edition. Those wishing to discover, or to reacquaint themselves with, Emerson’s writings but who have not known where or how to begin will not find a better starting place or more reliable guide than The Annotated Emerson.

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Most helpful customer reviews

30 of 31 people found the following review helpful.

Beautiful Rendering of Emerson

By James Strock

Ralph Waldo Emerson was a monumental figure of the 19th century. In the 20th century he became remote. First, he was relegated to the assigned reading lists of high schools everywhere--the kind of book you read too young, if at all, and likely never returned to. Later, some fashionable scholars would attempt to marginalize his work crudely, amid that of other "dead white males."

Emerson's America (he lived from 1803-1882) was a place of entrepreneurial enterprise, often on a small scale. His credo of individualism and freedom fit well to a nation that was yet to reach the heights of 20th century industrialism and centralized organizations. As the US headed toward what was called, in the mid-20th century, 'The New Industrial State,' Emerson's essays appeared less relevant, even quaint.

In the Information Age, Emerson is, increasingly, newly relevant. If there is a philosopher for the era of Tom Peter's 'Brand You' (in addition to Peters himself), surely it's Emerson.

'The Annotated Emerson' does a great service in introducing Emerson to a new generation, a new century. The foreword by Phillip Lopate is at once thorough and approachable. It makes the case for Emerson well.

The selections are edited and annotated by David Mikics. The interior design is memorable, beautifully rendered. Each selection has numerous notes, concisely included on the same page for ease of use. In some cases, illustrations are included. Taken together, these features enable contemporary readers to comprehend otherwise distant references. They also point toward additional areas of inquiry. Each page also includes sufficient space for readers to make their own notes, to truly make the book useful as a reference to return to.

The last point is important. Emerson is the philosopher of action, of crafting one's own life and art. In his self-creation and ambition and energy, he's a very American figure. His thoughts might be dismissed by some, in the terms noted by Lopate, as middle-class and middle-aged. Perhaps. In this reader's view, Emerson's ultimate contribution is in providing the words by which each of us can find our calling, our unique contribution. That is not a celebration or assertion of self-regard, as some would have it. Just the opposite: it sets the stage for contributions toward a commonwealth.

In sum, this is an outstanding book. It's a solid addition to any library. For young people or others who have not had the pleasure of encountering Emerson, it may well be a revelation.

32 of 34 people found the following review helpful.

Don't even think twice, just add this book to your cart

By areukind

Thank you David Mikics and Harvard University Press. It's only been a few days, but I can't help thinking that this book had to have been born from a labor of love and that the current offer to sell it for a mere \$22 on

amazon makes it more of a gift to the world than a transaction. In Buddhism there is the idea that the dharma should be given freely. I can't help but think of you folks in that light... spreading the dharma of Emerson. Thank you.

Anyone who loves Emerson should love this book. The selection of material is well chosen and the annotations are great. Besides helping the reader understand some of the references Emerson used in his writing, references that readers like me might otherwise skip over, there are also plenty of pictures that help one imagine Emerson's world.. what it might have been like walking in his shoes. The pages are luxuriously large (9.5 high by 9 wide) and the text large enough and un-cramped. As a previous reviewer observed, there's plenty of room on the pages to take your own notes and the author's notes all appear on the same page as they're referenced from, so no flipping back and forth. All in all, just a pleasure to read.

I own various collections of Emerson works. This is sure to be one of my favorites. I look forward to many happy years with The Annotated Emerson. Heck, I might even come to appreciate a poem or two... something no other collection has coaxed me to do. This book is truly a gift to the world. Thank you David and HUP!

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Lost Illusions/Publisher's Flaw

By Christian Schlect

Ralph Waldo Emerson's words and the explanatory job done by this annotated book's editor, Professor David Mikics are each quite good and often spectacular.

However, within my memory this is the first book I have purchased that is missing pages. Here I read avidly to page 450, then came to a full and puzzled stop. I was reading "Illusions" when I found the next page presented to me (459) was apparently from deep within the book's following chapter ("From Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli").

Eight pages lost?

I do highly recommend this book to other readers; just make sure you obtain a full and correct edition.

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