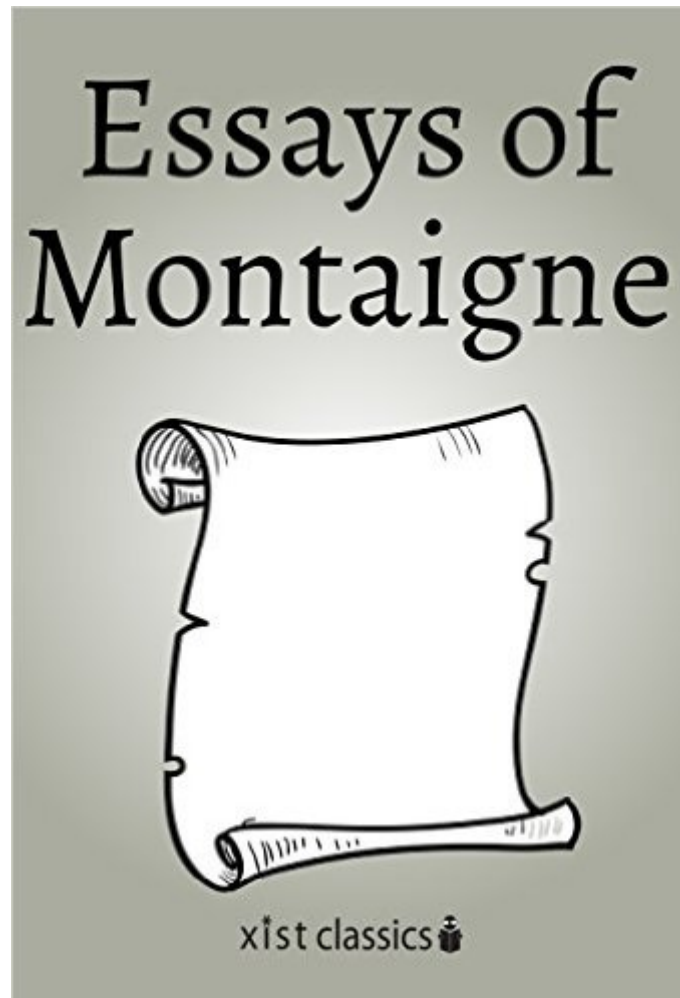


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Montaigne's Essays are one of the more enjoyable massive tomes of renaissance writing available, and if reading in English, one has two major modern choices of translation, Screech and Frame. To start with Translation: Both major translations are excellent in their own way, but some differences are of note. When a translation is done, usually the translator will translate the major language of the text, French in this case, and leave quotes by the author from other languages, mostly Latin in this case, untranslated. The translator will provide a note with the translation of the quote, and preferably the source of the quote. This is where Screech and Frame differ considerably. Screech does what should be done, and Frame just translates everything into English with no significant notations other than the person quoted. This means, however, that one may prefer one translation over the other based on this alone. For example, one that wishes to take a more scholarly look will likely use Screech (or the original), and one that simply wants to read for pleasure may have no problem using the translation by Frame. Also, Screech is British and Frame is American, so one may have other preferences for style. As for the Physical Copy: The physical copies of Frame's translation (Stanford and Everyman's) are vastly superior to the Penguin Classics Screech version. The Penguin paperback is thick, but in keeping with the generally small form factor, the print is terribly small, and the paper is of a horrible quality, which is the reason I also purchased the Kindle version. As for the Kindle version: The Penguin Classics Kindle file is much more pleasant to read and deal with than the paperback alternative.

MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE - THE COMPLETE ESSAYS. Translated and Edited with an Introduction and Notes by M. A. Screech. Iviiv + 1284 pp. (Penguin Classics). London : Penguin Books, 1993 and Reissued. ISBN 0-14-044604-4 (pbk.) Those who discover Montaigne should count themselves very lucky. There are so many authors competing for our attention today, so many brilliant and less than brilliant men and women both contemporary and of the past, so many poets, novelists, philosophers, thinkers of every stripe, that Montaigne's voice can easily get lost in the general racket, like the voice of a single cricket on a noisy summer's night. But Montaigne's voice is well worth singling out for special attention, like that one cricket whose song is especially musical, because there has never been anyone quite like him, nor anyone who has produced such a wealth of sensible observations on life and everything that goes to make it up. We love Montaigne for his humanity, his wisdom, his clear insight into human nature, his tolerance of our weaknesses and failings, his love and compassion for all creatures whether man, animal, or plant, his calm, gentle and amiable voice, his stately and dignified progress as he conducts us through the vast repository of his mind. But above all we love him for his plain good sense. Despite his distance in time, we can

open these essays almost anywhere and immediately become engrossed. Some of what he says, particularly about our weaknesses and failings, may not be particularly welcome to some, though the open-minded will acknowledge its self-evident truth. Montaigne was not afraid to speak his mind, and as a man who was interested in almost everything, his observations range from the curious through to the truly profound.

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