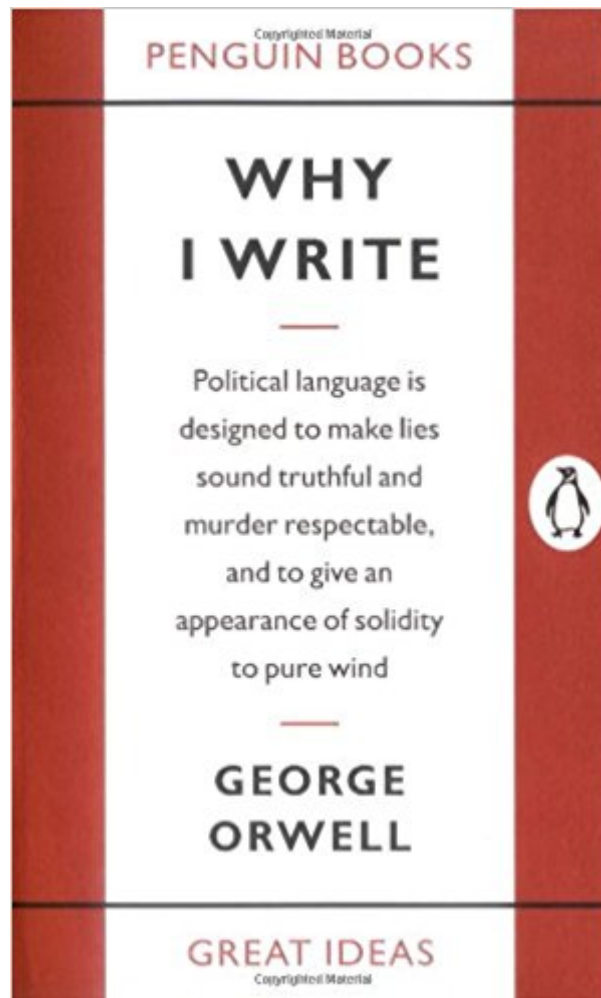




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Why I Write (Penguin Great Ideas)



Synopsis

Throughout history, some books have changed the world. They have transformed the way we see ourselves and each other. They have inspired debate, dissent, war and revolution. They have enlightened, outraged, provoked and comforted. They have enriched lives and destroyed them. Now, Penguin brings you the works of the great thinkers, pioneers, radicals and visionaries whose ideas shook civilization, and helped make us who we are. Penguin's Great Ideas series features twelve groundbreaking works by some of history's most prodigious thinkers, and each volume is beautifully packaged with a unique type-driven design that highlights the bookmaker's art. Offering great literature in great packages at great prices, this series is ideal for those readers who want to explore and savor the Great Ideas that have shaped the world. Whether puncturing the lies of politicians, wittily dissecting the English character or telling unpalatable truths about war, Orwell's timeless, uncompromising essays are more relevant, entertaining and essential than ever in today's era of spin.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Why I Write is a collection of four pieces by one of the best writers of the twentieth century. George Orwell is best known for his political fables *Animal Farm* and *1984*, but was also a prolific essayist and author of numerous short stories, many of them based on his own experiences in British-controlled Burma. This book includes three essays--"Why I Write", "The Lion and the

Unicorn", and "Politics and the English Language"--and the short story "A Hanging." "Why I Write" offers the reader a look into one great writer's motivations for writing, as Orwell lays out the only real reasons anyone writes. "The Lion and the Unicorn" is fascinating, not only for its often humorous descriptions of the British national character, but for the political ideas expressed in it and the knowledge, made clear by Orwell at the beginning, that this was written in the midst of the Blitz. "Politics and the English Language" is a brief guide to the fatal flaws of modern writing--all of which have lasted beyond Orwell--and how to mend them. "A Hanging" is reminiscent of another of Orwell's famous short stories, "Shooting the Elephant," as it describes an otherwise mundane action in ominous, metaphoric terms. While hardly exhaustive, this collection of Orwell's essays is a good introduction to Orwell, his writings, and his political views. Makes very good reading for a trip, which is where I read it. Highly recommended.

In evaluating "Why I write?," I am not evaluating Orwell: he is - in my opinion - beyond evaluation. Brilliant, unorthodox, humanistically transparent - he is a model of existential integrity. In evaluating "Why I write?" I am offering an evaluation of this particular compilation of essays. I am trying to answer the question of "Why should I buy the 'Why I write?'" This particular compilation of Orwell's essays consists of "Why I write?," "The Lion and the Unicorn," "A Hanging," and "Politics and the English Language." As you might have already gleaned from your search, the books of Orwell's essays are all over the market place. This one - consisting of four iconic essays - is a great primer. The "Why I write?" humbles with introspection and humanistic self-acceptance. "The Lion and the Unicorn" showcases Orwell's keen journalism and the capacity to be on the outside of the phenomenon in question, even when that phenomenon is his own culture. "A Hanging" is a normalizing glimpse into how we deal with our own mortality superimposed onto a social statement against capital punishment. And the "Politics and the English Language" is a brilliant examination of the human consciousness, a study of the interplay of thought and language, an anti-dote to propaganda, a treasure trove of linguistic hypotheses, and, if nothing else, a useful commentary on the rationale behind the "1984" Newspeak and Doublethink. As such, this particular collection of Orwell's essays reveals the breadth of his thematic spectrum - without the biographical weight of more exhaustive essay compilations. Pavel Somov, Ph.D. Author of "Eating the Moment: 141 Mindful Practices to Overcome Overeating One Meal at a Time" (New Harbinger, 2008)

Well, there was Our Man eager to read the four essays that are mentioned in the product description. But lo and behold when you buy the Kindle edition by Crabtree House for a steal at under

\$2.00, it only includes the one 15-screen essay, *Why I Write*, which is freely available on Google. The other three essays, that are in the description, are not included in the collection. A steal all right, but not the good kind.

Here is your chance to go into the thoughts and political beliefs of the famous writer George Orwell with the filter of his fictional writings removed. This work contains four short essays. In the first essay "Why I write" you really get an understanding of the man and his motivations to write. He is very candid in this essay and you get to know the man behind "Animal Farm" and "1984". In his second essay "The Lion and the Unicorn" he lays bare his political beliefs. In this short work he lays out his thoughts about Communism, Fascism, and Socialism and the struggle between them in England during World War II. What I really liked about this essay is that he wrote it while bombs were falling on London and with the outcome of World War II still undecided. While I strongly disagree with Orwell's Socialist ideals, they may have been more appropriate for his time period in his country. I enjoyed reading his opinions and learning about the social situation at that time in history. His third very brief essay tells about his witness to a hanging in Burma. The final essay is excellent in its examples of how in his time writers using the English language were drifting away from clarity and into using metaphors, similes, and figures of speech. He calls for a return to the clear and precise use of the language. He writes of six rules that will make that happen. If you enjoy George Orwell's writings, I believe you will enjoy this book.

This short (120 pages) book of 4 essays from one of the great modern writers is worth the read for three reasons: 1. The last essay, 'Politics and the English Language' should be required of all political writers and business writers as well. Though 50 years old it is equally pertinent today; well summarized in the 6 rules in the next to the last page. 2. The Hanging showed his descriptive skills, "Eight o'clock and a bugle call, desolately thin in the wet air, floated from the distant barracks." His description of the hanging of a Hindu man had more clarity than any modern photograph. 3. The Lion and the Unicorn, the longest of the essays, described the state of the English culture and its challenge from the growing European Fascists. It is an excellent picture of the British before their moment of truth. "It is a land of snobbery and privilege, ruled largely by the old and the silly.... A family with the wrong members in control." "A nation trained to think hedonistically cannot survive amid peoples who work like slaves and breed like rabbits, and whose chief national industry is war." Orwell's solution is democratic socialism; more acceptable in its day, less convincing 50- years later with the hindsight of many failures in socialism. These essays are valuable to students of writing and

to those who want to know more about the background of a great modern writer known for the classics *Animal Farm* and *1984*.

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