



...Or Not to Be: A Collection of Suicide Notes

Marc Etkind

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The first book of its kind", . . . Or Not to Be" offers rare insights into the lives--and deaths--of such luminaries as Vincent Van Gogh, Sylvia Plath, Diane Arbus, Jim Jones, Anne Sexton, Hermann Goering, Kurt Cobain, and Yukio Mishima, via their last letters and suicide notes.

...Or Not to Be: A Collection of Suicide Notes Details

Date : Published February 1st 1997 by Riverhead Trade

ISBN : 9781573225809

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Format : Paperback 114 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Psychology, Death, Health, Mental Health, Mental Illness, History

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From Reader Review ...Or Not to Be: A Collection of Suicide Notes for online ebook

Danny says

I felt morbidly perverted reading through this. Didn't realize I found something so personal and taboo this exciting to read what ruined it was the additional case study of the notes. I thought the psychology of the work would be interesting, but it came off smug and arrogant.

Lisa Vegan says

Hmm. The title was my favorite part of this book. 2 ½ stars for the book

I've never truly understood suicide notes. If one is through with life, why the need to write a note? If one has more to say, why not say it and not commit suicide or defer suicide?

This is a collection of writings previously published elsewhere: suicide notes from famous and unknown people, excerpts from notes, suicide notes of people who did not go on to attempt suicide or failed in their attempts. And, the most interesting parts in the book are tidbits of various statistics about suicide, and ancillary information about people and situations, rather than the notes themselves.

The organization of the book is interesting. The Contents: Introduction; The Birth of the Suicide Note; Love and Hate; To the Point?; Disgrace; Altruistic Suicide; The Artistic Temperament; In Public; Hollywood Endings; Suicide Diaries; Mass Suicide; Around the World; The Right to Die; Acknowledgments.

I liked the included information better than the actual notes, many of which were not all that interesting. Many were sad but not that interesting.

I wasn't wild that the author seemed to put forth his own prejudice against the right to die, something in which I fervently believe in. Having seen so many die of cancer and suffer with a variety of other maladies, I definitely want this option open for myself, should the need arise; I would not write a note.

Ryan Johnson says

Kind of "Fluffy" for a book dedicated to such a serious matter.

Mehwish Mughal says

"The book of suicide notes is pornography. In reading these, the most intimate documents, you are a sadistic voyeur, transforming someone else's pain into your own pleasure. Suicide notes simply should not be read by strangers" – Marc Etkind – A befitting opening to a book about suicide notes.

As I read through the notes, I had this longing to know the author. I wanted to know their demons; I wanted to know their pain; I wanted to know the person. It hurt. It hurt a lot.

This quote sums up my experience of this book:

"Suicide notes often seem like parodies of the postcards sent home from the Grand Canyon, the catacombs of the pyramids—essentially pro forma, not at all reflecting the grandeur of the scene being described or the depth of the human condition that one might expect to be engendered by the situation" - Shneidman

Lisa says

I thought this was an interesting and thought-provoking book. Some people call it suicide porn, and think it is disgusting to want to read notes left behind by mentally ill people at their most vulnerable and emotional time. I don't think so, and I think the compiler provided interesting and thoughtful commentary and statistics to accompany the notes. What I do find disgusting is the people who rated the book poorly because the notes themselves were "boring" or "not as interesting" as they had hoped.

Kassandra says

Fascinating and ultimately sad, if you've suffered a loved one's suicide and wished there had been at least a note, this shows that they often don't provide much insight, or attribute (not surprisingly) far more weight to current troubles than they merit. Morbid curiosity made me grab this off the shelf, and it's a decent read, but probably more would be gained from reading full biographies of some of the persons whose deaths were touched upon.

Susan says

This book is a quick and interesting read. While Etkind's analysis is superficial the notes themselves are fascinating, poignant and, at times, beautiful. My favourite quote, a single line from Ralph Barton: "The air is always full of reasons".

John Jr. says

Fascinating and useful if one is studying suicide. As there are many different possible reasons for choosing to die, so are there many different possible expressions with which to take one's leave, including silence.

Natalie says

This is without a doubt the most depressing book I've ever read.

Jenna Jonas says

"...Or Not to Be: A Collection of Suicide Notes" is one of the most darkly inspirational books I've ever read. To say this wasn't frightening to read at some point would be a lie; I had come to realize after reading this book the depths of the human mind in the state of uncontrollable depression. It astounds me that these were actually genuine accounts of the last minutes and last words of people's lives. It wasn't fiction like any other book; the fact that the "real world" pushed people to do what they did in such an ill mentality that had them desperately searching for help was the saddest of all things. I never actually realized, though, that there was depth to the science behind suicide notes. Their analysis is worded scientifically in sections of the book to explain the exact thoughts as the person who wrote the suicide note committed suicide. I can't summarize what I have read, because my words shouldn't hastily sum up the accounts of the ends of thousands of lives. Otherwise, it was a collection of different kinds of suicide notes. For instance, some people committed suicide because they were in love or guilt. I recommend this book to people specifically fascinated by psychology, like me.

Tommyboy says

Very informative book, really insightful.

Michael says

Part of a focused shelf on why people kill themselves. This collection of suicide notes (which is still, I believe, on loan to a friend in San Diego--grrrr) is interesting for the notes themselves, less so for the superficial commentary that accompanies them. Some of the notes are masterpieces of concision and avoidance. George Eastman's is: "Friends, My work is done. Why wait?"

Anyway, for those with a passing interest, this book is fascinating and worth a passionate skimming.

Audra says

"Life isn't divided into genres. It's a horrifying, romantic, tragic, comical, science-fiction cowboy detective novel ... with a bit of pornography if you're lucky."

the goodreads pitch machine threw that one at me on the morning i picked up this book. i didn't think too much of it at the time, at least nothing i'd care to share here. so as it happened much later in the evening, my *Or Not to Be* trip, when i came upon the (to quote Etkind) "pornography" of suicide notes and poems, i knew just how lucky i was. am.

Melissa Dally says

I'm sure I'm a terrible person for reading this, but it gave me a lot of insight into something that's hard to talk about.

Sati116 says

if you're looking to read a collection of various suicide notes (separated into categories such as "altruistic suicide," "disgrace" and "in public"), this book will do the trick. if you're looking for in-depth analysis on these notes or on suicide in general, don't bother with this one. commentary is surface and insipid...badly written by the author. the notes themselves are much more interesting.
