



The Best American Nonrequired Reading 2004 (The Best American Series)

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It's hard to imagine that it was just a year ago that we were finishing up last year's Best American Nonrequired Reading! Then again, doing last year's collection last year, as opposed to this year, seems to have been the right way to go. We took a gamble on that decision, and it paid off.

Like last year, our Best American mailbag is full of letters, written in crayon and blood and begging to be answered. Let us begin.

What is this collection again? You told me last year, but I spaced. -- Dominique, Santa Monica, CA Thank you for your question, Dominique, which I am happy to answer in much the same fashion as I did last year, when you first asked. The purpose of this book is to collect good work of any kind -- fiction, humor, essays, comics, journalism -- in one place, for the English-reading consumer. The first edition of the book could also be used as a low-frequency ham radio, but this feature has been discontinued.

Who are these "826 All-Stars" who are credited with co-editing this book? -- Dan and Becky, Newport, RI The 826 All-Stars is a moniker for a student committee, stalwart and true, that sifts through virtually everything published in the United States in a given year and from this morass -- did we say morass? We meant to say bounty -- finds the best twenty-five or so writings that work together and don't include references to bestiality or John Ashcroft or both. The student committee goes by these names: Alexei Wajchman, Kevin Feeney, Alison Cagle, Jeremy Ashkenas, Juliet Linderman, Adrienne Mahar, Antal Polony, Francesca Root-Dodson, Sabrina Ramos, and Jennifer Florin. They are all high school students from the San Francisco Bay area.

What sorts of things were eligible? Work from any periodicals at all? -- Dorsetta Cable, Pacifica, CA It's nice to hear from you, Dorsetta. The answer to your question is yes, as long as these periodicals are American and not about stereotypes of zombies or poetry. We always make a very concerted effort to include work from lesser-known magazines and quarterlies and Web sites, and we did find some great things in some small-circulation publications -- we did a better job of including such work this year than ever before. You should be very proud of your daughter.

Why is Viggo Mortensen writing an introduction to this book? You would think he would have better things to do. Was this part of some kind of work-release program or what? -- Lucy Hackett, Medfield, MA This collection's mission, if there is one -- and there isn't -- is to bring new writing to new audiences. We hope that people will pick up this book after seeing the name or names of a few writers they like and then become exposed to other good people who write. Viggo has been associated with 826 Valencia for some time, having helped us with fund-raising and such. He is also a noted poet and artist, and thus the perfect ambassador for this collection, bringing, we hope, new people to some great contemporary writing. We can only hope that this introduction-writing business takes off for him, given how lucrative it is and how much glory attends it.

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From reader reviews:

Karen Wells:

As people who live in often the modest era should be revise about what going on or facts even knowledge to make all of them keep up with the era which can be always change and move ahead. Some of you maybe will probably update themselves by examining books. It is a good choice for you but the problems coming to you actually is you don't know what kind you should start with. This The Best American Nonrequired Reading 2004 (The Best American Series) is our recommendation to help you keep up with the world. Why, as this book serves what you want and need in this era.

Mindy Hicks:

Information is provisions for individuals to get better life, information currently can get by anyone at everywhere. The information can be a understanding or any news even a huge concern. What people must be consider any time those information which is from the former life are challenging be find than now is taking seriously which one is suitable to believe or which one the actual resource are convinced. If you find the unstable resource then you have it as your main information it will have huge disadvantage for you. All those possibilities will not happen within you if you take The Best American Nonrequired Reading 2004 (The Best American Series) as your daily resource information.

Carey Gilliam:

Spent a free a chance to be fun activity to accomplish! A lot of people spent their leisure time with their family, or their own friends. Usually they undertaking activity like watching television, going to beach, or picnic from the park. They actually doing same thing every week. Do you feel it? Do you wish to something different to fill your personal free time/ holiday? Can be reading a book may be option to fill your no cost time/ holiday. The first thing that you ask may be what kinds of guide that you should read. If you want to try look for book, may be the e-book untitled The Best American Nonrequired Reading 2004 (The Best American Series) can be very good book to read. May be it could be best activity to you.

June Slater:

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