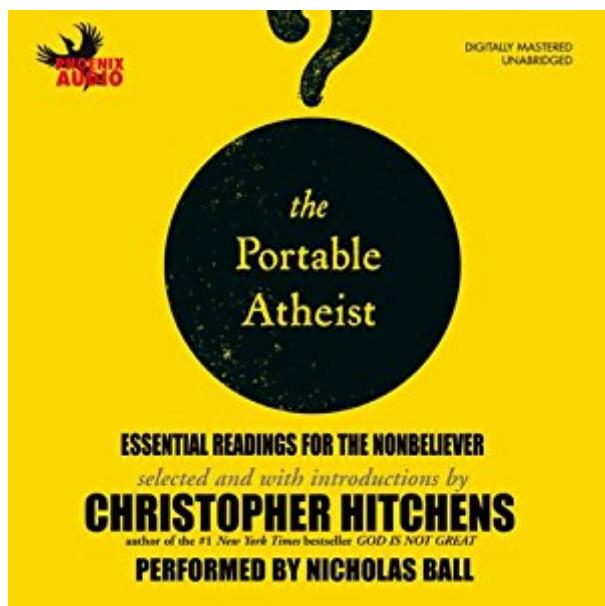


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The Portable Atheist: Essential Readings For The Nonbeliever



Synopsis

From the #1 New York Times best-selling author of *God Is Not Great*, a provocative and entertaining guided tour of atheist and agnostic thought through the ages--with never-before-published pieces by Salman Rushdie, Ian McEwan, and Ayaan Hirsi Ali. Christopher Hitchens continues to make the case for a splendidly godless universe in this first-ever gathering of the influential voices--past and present--that have shaped his side of the current (and raging) God/no-god debate. With Hitchens as your erudite and witty guide, you'll be led through a wealth of philosophy, literature, and scientific inquiry, including generous portions of the words of Lucretius, Benedict de Spinoza, Charles Darwin, Karl Marx, Mark Twain, George Eliot, Bertrand Russell, Emma Goldman, H. L. Mencken, Albert Einstein, Daniel Dennett, Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins, and many others well-known and lesser known. And they're all set in context and commented upon as only Christopher Hitchens--the political and literary journalist extraordinaire (Los Angeles Times)--can. Atheist? Believer? Uncertain? No matter: *The Portable Atheist* will speak to you and engage you every step of the way. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Make no mistake: Christopher Hitchens did not write this book; he is the editor, the compiler. The book is a compilation of the essays of other writers. Nevertheless, it is well worth reading, especially for anyone struggling to attain or maintain a belief in any religious dogma, whatever the source. The word "atheist" has such unpleasant connotations, bringing forth images of the repugnant Madeline

Murray O'Hare (RIP), or covens of witches stooped over a cauldron. But, inserting the word "atheist" makes for a provocative title, and will no doubt enhance sales. The contents, however, are not especially provocative, except perhaps to a True Believer. The writings contained therein could more properly be described as intellectual examinations of the God of the Abrahamic religions, who is alleged to be omniscient, benevolent, and omnipotent....and rather convincingly shown not to be.

I only discovered Christopher Hitchens about 1yr ago, but since that time I have been reading his works with enthusiasm. This book is not his writings of course, but a collection of writings that he finds important for non-believers. Thus, how could I turn down the advice of such a journalist. I gave the book 4 stars based purely on the fact that individuals interested in discussing such topics as religion, belief/non-belief, should, as Hitchens suggests, be somewhat versed in the more historical writings. However, from the standpoint of reading, I found this book very challenging. I have 2 advanced degrees in biology/medicine, and I'm not ashamed to say that I had to read many of the passages 2 or 3x to really get an understanding of what the author was trying to say. I mention the degrees not as evidence of intelligence, only to establish that I enjoy academic pursuits.....and this book would qualify as just that! If the topic of belief/non-belief is a passion/pursuit of yours, then this book would be valuable; however, if you are looking for some light reading in the evening, this may not be the best choice.

"The Portable Atheist: Essential Readings with the Non Believer" (Paperback) Christopher Hitchens. A series of writings written by numerous authors and nonbelievers down through the centuries for the nonbelievers of today. That is the simplest way of summing up the contents of the book. Some of them better than other ones, or at least that was my opinion of the essays that are contained in the book. But, it was well worth the time it took to read it. Nevertheless it is an important work for the nonbeliever. Who has rejected what is laughably called Christianity and the God complex that infests a large portion of our society. It has always been more about power, greed and wealth than it has been saving souls.

I'm about 3/4 of the way through and I am very happy I bought this. I don't own any of Christopher Hitchens's actual books, I have, however, watched his debates and speeches on Youtube, so I have a fairly good understanding of his arguments. This is not a book by Hitchens, but rather a selection of writings by other atheists. What I wanted from this book was a broad reading of atheistic literature

through the ages, and this is exactly that. It is not thorough, but it does go through many of the well known atheists, and also through some lesser known ones. He touches briefly upon Marx, just show people the actual "religion is opium for the masses" quote in context. Apparently that was a pet peeve of Hitchens's, so he added a chapter of Marx's work for clarification. Not only are these selections from arguments, but he also has a chapter from a narrative novel, that highlights a common argument of the "apparent design of the universe" and "something cannot come from nothing", which made it interesting to read the argument in narrative form during a dinner party. There is also a memoir from a man who knew Billy Graham and was close to him; this was one of my favorite parts to read, because it got inside (second hand) the head of Graham and how one decision effected this man's life; a life of education vs a life of preaching to the masses. It was a poignant reflection and probably could've happened to anyone in those circumstances. There is plenty of arguments against the various notions of a god, which mostly focuses on christianity; so if you want the book for that it's definitely a good buy. Although, if you're familiar with all the arguments it won't really show you anything different or new. What it does do is give you the cream of the crop of the writing abilities of various atheists. The arguments may be old now, but their words give them such clarity that it's hard to put down. On the same point, there is this one selected work that had me going for the dictionary every paragraph, it was quite thick, not necessarily pompous, but if english is your second language or your vocabulary is just alright, then it might give you problems. Most the work in here is not difficult to understand, so one could skip over the hard parts and not miss out that much.

Power-packed collection of timeless works, both modern and classics. A must-read for anyone who considers himself a thinking human in the 21st century. I was sad when I turned the last page because I had grown accustomed to enjoying a selection each morning!

Essential reading, in my opinion, is an understatement! Wonderful to be able to access a comprehensive collection of works. One cannot help but laugh while reading, say, Mark Twain's missive 'From Europe and Elsewhere and A Pen Warmed Up in Hell'. The article chosen from Bertrand Russell's essay 'An Outline of Intellectual Rubbish' is too good to not read more than once. Perhaps Hitchens fits into a spot that warms the cynical soul (no pun intended as he certainly did not believe such exists) but his choices in this collection fit the bill for the skeptical as well as those who might enjoy a more sedate intellectual approach to the rational of unbelief by some of the great men and women of history.

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