



# Dear Mister Essay Writer Guy: Advice and Confessions on Writing, Love, and Cannibals

By Dinty W. Moore

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## Dear Mister Essay Writer Guy: Advice and Confessions on Writing, Love, and Cannibals By Dinty W. Moore

Dear Mister Essay Writer Guy,

I have a hot crush on the em dash. What does my need to stuff—while simultaneously fracturing—my sentences—with the meandering, the explanatory, the discursive, the perhaps not-entirely-necessary—say about me?  
—Cheryl Strayed

Have you ever wished there were an advice columnist for writers, but one who didn't take things so damned seriously? This unique writing guide pairs questions sent in by top contemporary essayists with hilariously witty answers and essays from acclaimed author Dinty W. Moore. Phillip Lopate asks for advice on writing about your ex without sounding like an ass, Julianna Baggott worries that to be a great writer you must drink like a fish, and Roxane Gay asks whether it's kosher to write about writing.

Taking advantage of all the tools available to today's personal essayist—egregious puns, embarrassing anecdotes, and cocktail napkins—Professor Moore answers these questions, and more, demystifying the world of nonfiction once and for all. With a tip of the hat to history's most infamous essay—Montaigne's "Of Cannibals"—this book provides rollicking relief for writers in distress.

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*By Dinty W. Moore*

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"... a guide to writing essays that is both brilliantly instructive and wonderfully entertaining. . . . Highly recommended for writers and anyone who loves to laugh out loud while they read."

-- *Library Journal* (starred review)

"[Moore's] witty and disarming new book is framed as an advice column for accomplished writers. . . He is fun to read (don't miss Mr Plimpton's Revenge: A Google Maps Essay, in Which George Plimpton Delivers My Belated and Well-Deserved Comeuppance). And he sneaks in answers so we are left with a touch of wisdom as well as laughter."

-- BBC.com

"*Dear Mister Essay Writer Guy* is Moore at his best. It's witty but also substantial, and the conversations between Moore and his interlocutors get to the heart of what makes the essay such a compelling form: its capacity to render, on the page, the human experience."

-- The Rumpus

"... the book as a whole will leave you feeling educated, amused, and perhaps even inspired."

-- The A.V. Club

"*Dear Mister Essay Writer Guy* is an enjoyable read. . . Its witty, modest tone belies the artistry of the essays contained, which are exemplars of the short form."

-- Shelf Awareness

#### About the Author

DINTY W. MOORE is a highly regarded essayist and author of numerous books, including *The Mindful Writer*, *Crafting the Personal Essay*, and the memoir *Between Panic and Desire*, winner of the Grub Street Nonfiction Book Prize. He has been published in the *Philadelphia Inquirer Magazine*, *Gettysburg Review*, *Harper's*, and *Crazyhorse*, among others. He also edits *Brevity: The Journal of Concise Literary Nonfiction* and has served as coordinating editor for the annual anthology *Best Creative Nonfiction*. Moore currently teaches as director of Ohio University's BA, MA, and PhD in Creative Writing program.

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#### Introduction

Perhaps you are standing in the bookstore, scanning this introductory chapter, wondering just what sort of book you have in hand. You are a good-looking person whose minor flaws seem to only accentuate your considerable charm. You are intelligent. And immune to flattery. Moreover, you admire those who are plain-spoken, so let me be entirely forthright: This is the most important book ever published, except for a very old book that Moses started writing back in 800 BCE, one that a bunch of saints and raggedy disciples had to finish for him over the next thousand years.

Talk about missing a deadline! Boy, *his* editor must have been mighty ticked off. In any case, that other book is all well and good, but it rapidly bogs down in questions such as how many goats must be slaughtered to atone for beheading your eldest son and who begat whom. Good stuff if you are a theologian, but stop to think a moment: are you a theologian?

Probably not.

The book you are holding here tackles more urgent questions, questions more relevant to the modern reader, questions such as “What is the essay? And why? And how ought we to feel about it, given that there is nothing on television this evening?”

To that end, I have reached out to contemporary essayists such as Phillip Lopate, Cheryl Strayed, Diane Ackerman, Lee Gutkind, Steve Almond, Lia Purpura, Ander Monson, and a host of other fine writers, many of whom are close friends with Oprah Winfrey. I asked each of them to send me a question about the contemporary essay, in an attempt to once and for all settle the burning question: who reads this stuff?

My inspiration here is the sixteenth-century French nobleman and father of the essay form Michel de Montaigne. He broke literary ground by writing mainly of the self, bravely admitting to the reader, “I cannot keep my subject still. It goes along befuddled and staggering, with a natural drunkenness.”

Drunkenness, befuddlement, the occasional staggering. What’s not to like? For those of you who have wondered, by the way, the name Montaigne is pronounced this way: Montaigne.

So this is a Writing Guide of sorts, but since the true arc of the essay is the author’s thoughts moving on the page in a compelling fashion, this is also a Thinking Guide. If you have trouble thinking, this is the book for you!

Enjoy yourself. Consider reading passages aloud to your spouse or partner, or just slither up to a complete stranger at the corner coffee shop and let loose a chapter or two. You’ll find yourself making lifelong friends that way.

And afterward, if you have questions, or are wondering where to send flowers, feel free to contact me (misteressayguy@gmail.com).

I do so look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,  
Dinty W. Moore  
*aka* Mister Essay Writer Guy

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Do you have favorite book? When you have, what is your favorite's book? Guide is very important thing for us to know everything in the world. Each guide has different aim or maybe goal; it means that publication has different type. Some people sense enjoy to spend their the perfect time to read a book. These are reading whatever they get because their hobby will be reading a book. Think about the person who don't like looking at a book? Sometime, man or woman feel need book after they found difficult problem or perhaps exercise. Well, probably you will require this Dear Mister Essay Writer Guy: Advice and Confessions on Writing, Love, and Cannibals.

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