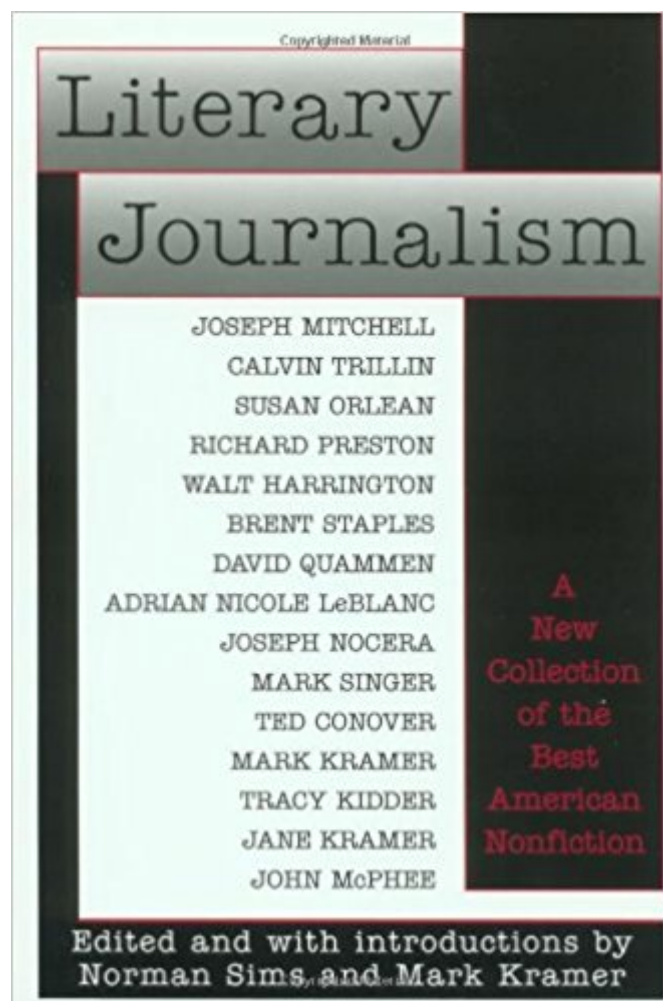




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# Literary Journalism: A New Collection Of The Best American Nonfiction



## Synopsis

Some of the best and most original prose in America today is being written by literary journalists. Memoirs and personal essays, profiles, science and nature reportage, travel writing -- literary journalists are working in all of these forms with artful styles and fresh approaches. In *Literary Journalism*, editors Norman Sims and Mark Kramer have collected the finest examples of literary journalism from both the masters of the genre who have been working for decades and the new voices freshly arrived on the national scene. The fifteen essays gathered here include:-- John McPhee's account of the battle between army engineers and the lower Mississippi River-- Susan Orlean's brilliant portrait of the private, imaginative world of a ten-year-old boy-- Tracy Kidder's moving description of life in a nursing home-- Ted Conover's wild journey in an African truck convoy while investigating the spread of AIDS-- Richard Preston's bright piece about two shy Russian mathematicians who live in Manhattan and search for order in a random universe-- Joseph Mitchell's classic essay on the rivermen of Edgewater, New Jersey-- And nine more fascinating pieces of the nation's best new writing. In the last decade this unique form of writing has grown exuberantly -- and now, in *Literary Journalism*, we celebrate fifteen of our most dazzling writers as they work with great vitality and astonishing variety.

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## Customer Reviews

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Good introduction to the genre. This is an academic anthology that includes some financial and analytical pieces which are fairly dry, a comparison of American and Russian farming which lacked human interest for me as a reader, and several deeply personal pieces. The character studies were much more appealing. I read the introductory material with professional interest and then skipped around to the examples which interested me personally.

A range of classics of literary journalism here, written over the last century by some masters of the genre. Great reading and strong models of how to write . . .

Thank you

TERRIFIC! HIGHLY RECOMMEND!

A number of years ago, Mark Kramer let me sit in on a narrative nonfiction seminar he taught at Harvard. I was running a think tank at Harvard's Kennedy School and I was getting restless. I wanted to write -- not just academic stuff, but stories that ordinary intelligent people would read. I got this book to accompany the class. Mark was a first-rate teacher. In class we read each other's work and critiqued it. Mark marked up everyone's pieces, usually with an ocean of ink. But here's the thing. Every mark not only offered a tip, but a whole way of looking at storytelling. I ended up leaving my position because I wanted to write the kinds of pieces in this book, which Mark Kramer and Norman Sims have gathered. Reading this book is like sitting in on Mark Kramer's class. Every piece offers a bunch of lessons. Most of the lessons are about details. Not just what someone looks like or where the event took place or what happened next, but the telling details that most people wouldn't notice but which symbolize the whole piece. These details can be found, by anyone willing to do the hard work of reporting and observing and asking questions. This is a Michelin's Guide to writing stories. When you read Joseph Mitchell, Calvin Trillin, Susan Orlean, John McPhee, Joe Nocera, Brent Staples, and the other great journalists in this volume, you see how the pros do it. The two prefatory essays and the shorter introductions to the pieces show you how to pay attention to the pros. The rest is up to you. Since meeting Mark Kramer and reading this book, I have written narrative works about civil rights (*Nobody Turn Me Around: A People's History of the 1963 March on Washington*) and baseball (*The Last Nine Innings* and *A Little League, Big Dreams*), as well as a number of magazine pieces and ghostwritten works. But, thanks to the inspiration of Mark Kramer, I have also developed a complete system for writing, which is contained in *The Writing Code: The Only Comprehensive Guide To Writing Well in All Fields* (The Writing Code Series) and a number of other ebooks. Bottom line: Mark Kramer and Norman Sims have the right idea. Read the greats, emulate the greats, work hard like the greats, and you can do some pretty good work yourself.

Great feature writing is often notable for its transparency, drawing the reader into the story with the power and immediacy of the subject matter. Not surprising then that the craft and quality of the writing itself is sometimes overlooked. Sims and Kramer have produced an eclectic mix of fine writing which challenge the reader to regard it from the perspective of literary attributes and construction, as well as its fascinating and obscure topics of human interest. These are some of the finest feature journalists in the country, each with his own style and emphasis, and all with the ability to look at small stories with great insight into their human dimensions. It's an excellent book for

prospective writers and for anyone interested in stories of sometimes mundane matters which are given transcendent implications by a keen journalistic sense and prowess. (Literary Journalists, another Sims collection from 1984 is also recommended.. it's not dated at all!)

Ted Conover's piece on Africa, Adrian Nicole LeBlanc's "Trina and Trina" -- well, basically everything the editors chose was outstanding. What I especially valued were the introductions on the art of "literary journalism" and the introductions to each of the journalists. I'm teaching a workshop this fall at The Writers Center in Bethesda and I'm putting on the reading list with a great big star.

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