



The Book of Delights

Ross Gay

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Ross Gay's *The Book of Delights* is a genre-defying book of essays—some as short as a paragraph; some as long as five pages—that record the small joys that occurred in one year, from birthday to birthday, and that we often overlook in our busy lives. His is a meditation on delight that takes a clear-eyed view of the complexities, even the terrors, in his life, including living in America as a black man; the ecological and psychic violence of our consumer culture; the loss of those he loves. Among Gay's funny, poetic, philosophical delights: the way Botan Rice Candy wrappers melt in your mouth, the volunteer crossing guard with a pronounced tremor whom he imagines as a kind of boat-woman escorting pedestrians across the River Styx, a friend's unabashed use of air quotes, pickup basketball games, the silent nod of acknowledgment between black people. And more than any other subject, Gay celebrates the beauty of the natural world—his garden, the flowers in the sidewalk, the birds, the bees, the mushrooms, the trees.

This is not a book of how-to or inspiration, though it could be read that way. Fans of Roxane Gay, Maggie Nelson, and Kiese Laymon will revel in Gay's voice, and his insights. *The Book of Delights* is about our connection to the world, to each other, and the rewards that come from a life closely observed. Gay's pieces serve as a powerful and necessary reminder that we can, and should, stake out a space in our lives for delight.

The Book of Delights Details

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Author : Ross Gay

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From Reader Review The Book of Delights for online ebook

Beck says

Having really liked Ross Gay's Catalog of Unabashed Gratitude, I was very excited to read The Book of Delights. I absolutely loved it. Gay recorded daily delights for a year, and then collected them in this book of what he calls essayettes. (I would argue some could also be considered prose poems.) Gay has an incredible ability to see the absolute good in humanity, and he also stops and appreciates nature in all of its forms. I expected a lot of nature pieces due to his poetry, but what I didn't expect was that this book would be so funny. I kept giggling and reading parts aloud. I also deeply related to the essay about having to fix things in whatever way possible. There are more sobering entries as well, reflecting on racism and inequality. Ultimately this book really did make me think about all the little delightful things I gloss over in my own life, and I appreciated that. Everyone should read this.

Thanks to netgalley and the publisher for the advanced copy!

Abby says

Some years ago I read a journal of short fiction from cover to cover, looking for a happy story. The only one that seemed to qualify was about a woman who turned into a hide-a-bed sofa and lived contentedly thereafter. I am still not sure it counts. Look--nothing I was ever assigned, nothing I was ever led to call literature, concerned itself with happiness. Happiness doesn't seem to make the interesting-enough-to-write-about list. So to hear Ross Gay say, "I've realized that my project is joy," and, "Joy is what interests me" is like letting out a breath you didn't know you were holding.

I'm honestly a little torn. I'm glad for the book of delights, as specific and universal as griefs. It's a conceptually hefty book because Ross Gay believes delight comes from recognizing that we all die. Knowing that we all lose the game makes losing the game kind of a meaningless concept. Recognizing the great equalizer and universal loss inspires solidarity, "something deeply good in us."

But maybe I suffer some residual effects of my training that says joy isn't hefty enough. Not even what Ross Gay calls "adult joy," which comes with emotional complexity and awareness. I wanted some of these essays to be thought through a little further, to be a little less off-the-cuff (e.g. being a school crossing guard is not a volunteer job, though it doesn't pay much, either). I know factual accuracy is not the point of these essays, and I know my love of research is kind of extreme, but it would not have been hard to Google some of this stuff before printing it. I don't think it would have hurt the project.

This catalog of daily delight apparently ran from August 2016 through August 2017, a period of time when I could have written a book of daily rage (and, honestly, did) (it was useful). Ross Gay is right to point out that his book, "a book of black delight," is a landmark, a monument to the sturdiness of joy, a declaration that it is the right and reality of all people to experience the full breadth and depth of emotion, delight included. This guy, man. I've never seen anyone bring a room to a standing ovation with poetry more consistently than Ross Gay. May the delight he brings be returned to him fourfold.

Also someone please start making those "INCITE DELIGHT" t-shirts pronto.

Gretchen Lida says

This is a book to teach us to look up and be rebellious enough to find beauty where we were told there was none. It is filled with Tiny essays, perfect for a read a day or to read all at once.

Karin Schott says

This becomes the problem with a little book like this, you want to gobble it down. Sorta like potato chips. You promise yourself you'll only eat a handful. Enjoy their flavor, perhaps think on the salt on your tongue and before you know it, you've eaten the whole bag!

I loved this little book. Each eassayette a meditation on delight in all the ways it enters our days if we only take the time to observe how it weaves into our days, our minds, and our senses. I finished reading this book with several desires. First, this seems an excellent idea to have in my writing practice. Second, I need to read some Ross Gay poetry. His writing is light but deceptively heavy at times. He is funny and relishes his own flawed humanity. Third, I'd love to see his garden. It sounds wild, abundant, and joyful just like him.

Nancy says

I'm still smiling.

Sarah says

This is such a delightful book. It's politically engaged, and yet it refuses to be cynical. It's funny, sexy, unabashedly joyful and it inspired me to start my own catalogue of delights. And perhaps just as importantly, Ross Gay has found more ways to talk about the physical feeling of joy than I thought possible (some of my favorite: "All the herons in my chest whacking unrepentantly into the sky" and "My heart cooing like a pigeon nestled on a windowsill where the spikes rusted off.")

Laurie Anderson says

Poet Ross Gay has written an exquisite collection of short essays. He is a master of observations, opening many of the essays with close attention to the details in his world then taking the reader along with him on a stroll through time, tenderness, and joy.

Everybody in the whole world should buy and read this book. It was the perfect book with which to end 2018 and approach 2019 with some steadfast hope.

You should also check out his event calendar and go listen to him when he is within a seven-hour drive of

your house: <http://www.rossgay.net/calendar>

(I was fortunate enough to get an ARC at the Pacific Northwest Booksellers Association tradeshow.)

Laura Hoffman Brauman says

I enjoyed reading this collection of short essays . Gay wrote an essay a day (mostly) on the little things that brought him delight that day. I dipped in and out of this over the course of a week -- there was something wonderful about a daily practice of noticing and appreciating the little things that can bring us joy if we slow down enough to be aware of them.

Booktart says

I think I would have enjoyed this even more in print because, although the author has a great reading voice, this book is really about the language and, being a poet, the author uses beautiful language that I would have liked to examine visually. Nonetheless, this is a delightful (ha...ha) book that made me more observant of the little things that cause delight daily. I also learned from Gay's reflections on what these small situations mean each day as a black man in America.

S. A. Hackett says

As a 1st time reader of Gay's work, I loved the simple and interesting real experiences he had that nerved him to write essays for a whole year. This 'Book of Delights' made me appreciate the little things and our journey as humans in a world where we're all trying to live one day, one step, at a time. Buy this book!

Austin Araujo says

A million little and big hearts fluttering

Allison says

Absolutely delightful. Review to come

Colin says

Why I read

Billie says

I really needed this right now. I am grateful to Ross Gay for embarking upon a project to record one delight every day for a year and then finding a way to share those delights with all of us. Thank you, Mr. Gay, for being a light. The world needs you and people like you very much right now.

February 3, 2019: So, I spent the last couple of days listening to the audiobook on my commute and, if possible, I might be even more in love with the book the second time around. If a book could be a hug, this book is a big, warm, lingering hug from a good friend on a bad day. So much love for this book that is, on the surface, not my kind of book.

Jaime says

This was, for lack of a better word, delightful. Or “delight-full,” quite literally. Gay’s warm prose is compulsively readable, and his eye for detail brings you deep into the little things. Sentences would bring me up short with their simple, obvious brilliance. Or observations would make me smile as I turned the page, nodding my head yes. At a time when we could all use some beauty, this was perfect.
