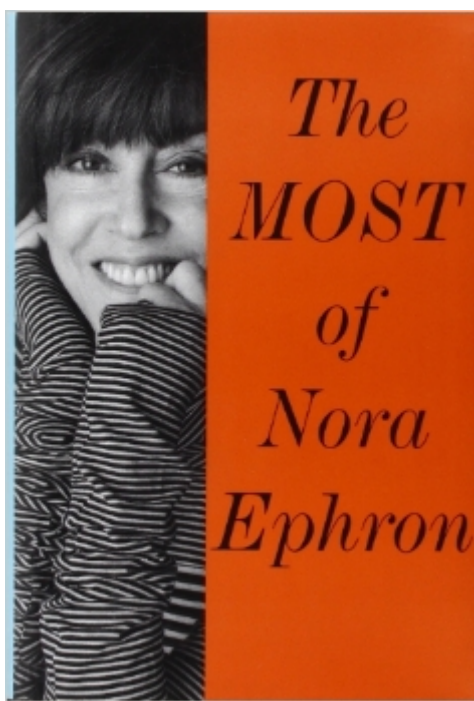


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The Most Of Nora Ephron



Synopsis

A whopping big celebration of the work of the late, great Nora Ephron, America's funniest and most acute writer, famous for her brilliant takes on life as we've been living it these last forty years. Everything you could possibly want from Nora Ephron is here—from her writings on journalism, feminism, and being a woman (the notorious piece on being flat-chested, the clarion call of her commencement address at Wellesley) to her best-selling novel, *Heartburn*, written in the wake of her devastating divorce from Carl Bernstein; from her hilarious and touching screenplay for the movie *When Harry Met Sally . . .* (I'll have what she's having) to her recent play *Lucky Guy* (published here for the first time); from her ongoing love affair with food, recipes and all, to her extended takes on such controversial women as Lillian Hellman and Helen Gurley Brown; from her pithy blogs on politics to her moving meditations on aging (I Feel Bad About My Neck) and dying. Her superb writing, her unforgettable movies, her honesty and fearlessness, her nonpareil humor have made Nora Ephron an icon for America's women—and not a few of its men.

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Customer Reviews

I have to admit a few things before I give my opinion of this book. First of all, I never really knew anything about Nora Ephron, including the fact that I never saw her movie or read her book. Also, I received this book free by winning a First Reads contest. Now that it is all out in the open, I absolutely loved everything about this book. This was one incredible woman. It is almost as if

everything that she touched in her career turned to gold. Of course, you can't say the same about her private life, but still, this lady was truly hard to not like. Her screenplay for "When Harry Met Sally" and her book "Heartburn" were so easy to become entranced in. I couldn't put this book down, and it still took quite a while to read, because it is a huge book. If you can read this book through without laughing out loud a few times and comparing something in Nora's life to your own, you're just not normal.

Her friend, the editor Robert Gottlieb, says it well in his introduction: Nora Ephron, who died last year at age 71, was a reporter, a profile writer, a polemicist, a novelist, a screenwriter, a playwright, a memoirist, and a (wicked) blogger. She was also a good cook, apparently, and the writer-director of some of the more charming romantic comedies of the past 20 years. The nice thing about books such as *THE MOST OF NORA EPHRON*, a 550-page collection of her writing, is that they serve two purposes. They're candy for people who like the author, and they're a good introduction for the uninitiated. Fans as well as those unfamiliar with Ephron's work will find much to enjoy here. The book is divided into nine categories, each one devoted either to subjects Ephron wrote about or the many literary forms for which she became famous. As she tells us in "Journalism: A Love Story," Beverly Hills native Ephron began her career in 1962 when, having just received a degree in political science from Wellesley, she got a job in *Newsweek's* mailroom. She soon worked her way up (if up is the right word) to clipper, in which she ripped up the country's newspapers and routed the clips to the relevant departments, and then to researcher, which she says was a fancy term for a fact-checker. She eventually went on to write for other publications, including *Esquire* and *New York* magazines and the *New York Post*, the last of which had offices so dirty that someone once wrote "Philthy" in the thick dust that had collected on a window. In her two decades as a journalist, Ephron perfected the hilariously caustic style that would make her famous. In "The Palm Beach Social Pictorial," an *Esquire* piece from 1975, she tells us about a periodical written by and for the wealthy women of Palm Beach, Florida. The cover story of one issue was about Mignon Roscher Gardner, a prominent artist-aviatrix whose most recent work, a painting of a naked young man on a flying black horse, was inspired by Gardner's desire to combine her love for horses and for flying. Of Dorothy Schiff, the skittishly feminine owner of the *New York Post*, Ephron writes, "[I]t seems never to have crossed her mind that she might have a public obligation to produce a good newspaper." In a 1973 piece on Julie Nixon Eisenhower, Ephron muses that

besotted journalists who buy Julie Efron's honeyed words about her father have been around Nixon so long that they don't recognize a chocolate-covered spider when they see one. The middle section of the book contains three of Efron's longer works. First is HEARTBURN, the recipe-filled novel she wrote about her brief, post-Watergate marriage to Carl Bernstein. The narrator of the novel, Rachel Samstat, is a successful cookbook writer who, seven months pregnant, discovers that her journalist husband is having an affair. The second work is Get Lucky, a surprisingly earthy (and sketchy) play produced on Broadway earlier this year. Tom Hanks played Mike McAlary, the reporter for the now-defunct Newsday who in the 1980s broke the story of corrupt police officers in New York's 77th Precinct. The third work is the screenplay for When Harry Met Sally, the Woody Allen-esque romantic comedy starring Billy Crystal and Meg Ryan. Among the more delightful pieces in this collection are Efron's essays on food, in which she condemns the egg-white omelette and grass-fed beef, praises the greatest hot pastrami sandwich she had ever eaten, and chronicles the gossip and internecine struggles among the Big Four of the 1960s Food Establishment: Craig Claiborne, Michael Field, James Beard and Julia Child. Efron had a tendency to generalize whenever she wrote about relationships. "The truth is that men don't want to be friends with women," she writes in the afterword to When Harry Met Sally. One assumes she was referring to straight men, but, in any event, she might have been pleased to learn that her premise is not universally correct. Aside from this, however, Efron's writing is a treat, always perceptive and funny. Her voice is consistent: But for the topical references, you'd never be able to tell whether a piece was written in 1968 or 2010. She developed a unique, engaging voice, and developed it early in her career --- a remarkable achievement. Readers who like their humor heavily seasoned with sarcasm will love this book. - Michael Magras

Doesn't much matter which of those 557 pages fall open. Wherever you land you should find a good read. Here's a sampling: There's Nora, the thrice married New Yorker daughter of Hollywood screenwriters. Nora of 1960's Newsweek, when the only jobs open to women were in the mailroom. Nora, the New York Post journalist, novelist, filmmaker and playwright. Nora sitting around with Rob Reiner dithering with improving the script of "When Harry Met Sally." Nora settling scores with her unfaithful second husband in "Heartburn," the book that became a Meryl Streep movie. Nora as writer/director of "You've Got Mail" and "Sleepless in Seattle." Nora, the foodie, on having people to dinner and life in the land of the egg-white omelette. And the Nora who knew early on who Deep Throat was, but nobody believed her. Nora and her profiles of Helen Gurley Brown, Julie Nixon

Eisenhower and other well known women. Nora on life in the Google years. Nora on the "O" word and remembering nothing. Nora's script of "Lucky Guy," her 2-act play that ran on Broadway, starring Tom Hanks, in 2013. Nora's "Story of My Life in 3,500 Words or Less" and two one-page lists of "What I Won't Miss" and "What I Will Miss." Nora Ephron died of leukemia at 71 in June, 2012.

Nora Ephron is funny. Because she seeks the truth, after I've stopped laughing, I find myself oddly, deeply affected and a bit teared up. She left us too soon, so I'm glad I got this great, big fat compendium of her work from the many facets of her life--newspaper and magazine journalist, epic foodie, novelist, screenwriter, playwright. Somehow her love of eating and cooking works its way into a lot of what she's written as a novelist, screenwriter, and journalist. Her confiding tone makes her feel like a girlfriend, someone I stay in touch with long after moving on from the school or job where we first met. The Most of Nora Ephron gives me the opportunity to revisit Ephron's wit and warmth again and again.

This splendid collection of Nora Ephron's work should be read by every woman in America, and MOST men. Readers are not meant to read it straight through, but sample it as one would a box of chocolates. However, I read it over my Christmas vacation in one fell swoop, hating to put it down. Nora Ephron's death brought out a spasm of national mourning, and reading her work again, one can see why. She is often compared to Dorothy Parker, but it's a false analogy. Parker was cold at the heart; Ephron was warm and human all the way through. Read this!

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