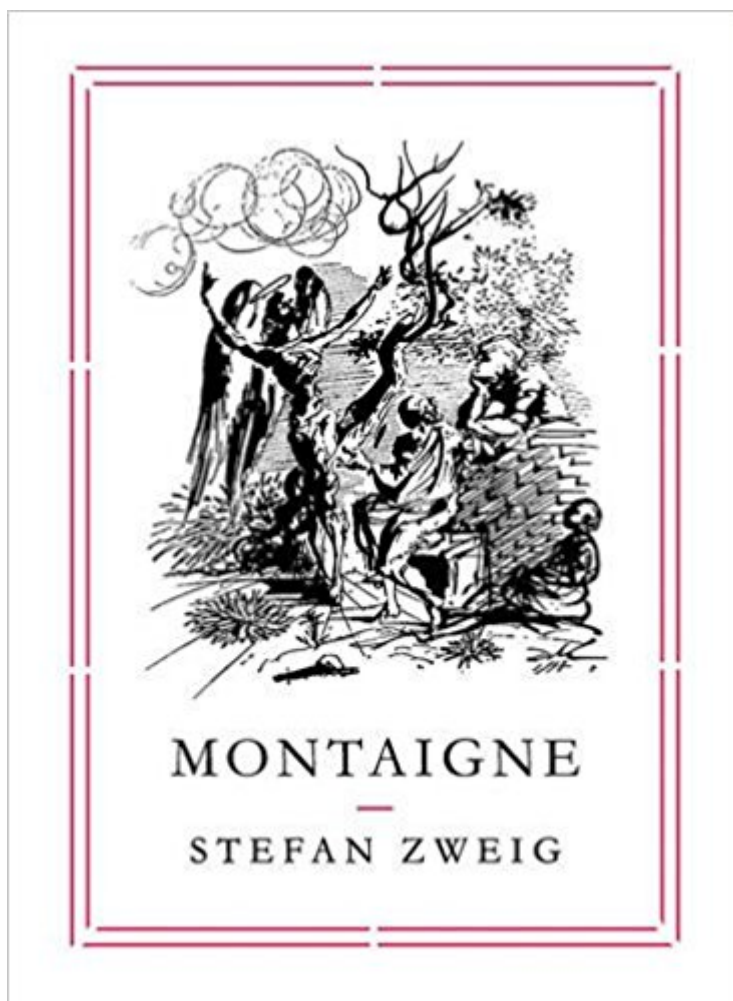


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# Montaigne (Pushkin Collection)



## Synopsis

Written during the Second World War, Zweig's typically passionate and readable biography of Michel de Montaigne, is also a heartfelt argument for the importance of intellectual freedom, tolerance and humanism. Zweig draws strong parallels between Montaigne's age, when Europe was torn in two by conflict between Catholicism and Protestantism, and his own, in which the twin fanaticisms of Fascism and Communism were on the verge of destroying the pan-continental liberal culture he was born into, and loved dearly. Just as Montaigne sought to remain aloof from the factionalism of his day, so Zweig tried to the last to defend his freedom of thought, and argue for peace and compromise. One of the final works Zweig wrote before his suicide, this is both a brilliantly impassioned portrait of a great mind, and a moving plea for tolerance in a world ruled by cruelty.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Thanks to Stone's assiduous translation, Zweig's fascinating meditation on the writer in whom he saw himself mirrored appears now for the first time in English. Zweig weaves biographical elements into his study of Montaigne's study of Latin at age four, his retirement from his public duties as a French nobleman at age 38 but the book is more properly an introduction to an endlessly inquisitive thinker who never stopped searching for the truth... This captivating study portrays a writer whose life and work can be summed up by his constant posing of the question, 'How should I

live?" " Publishers Weekly 'Zweig's accumulated historical and cultural studies remain a body of achievement almost too impressive to take in' - Clive James '[Pushkin Press's republication of Stefan Zweig's work] has been entirely successful. Zweigmania seems to break out with the publication of each book, with readers discovering his work by word-of-mouth and by accident' - Guardian '[Zweig's] life and work tell of the perilous flimsiness of our world of security-a message that many insistently deny, but somehow need to hear' - John Gray, New Statesman

Stefan Zweig was born in 1881 in Vienna, into a wealthy Austrian-Jewish family. He studied in Berlin and Vienna and was first known as a poet and translator, then as a biographer. Between the wars, Zweig was an international bestseller with a string of hugely popular novellas including Letter from an Unknown Woman, Amok and Fear. In 1934, with the rise of Nazism, he left Austria, and lived in London, Bath and New York-a period during which he produced his most celebrated works: his only novel, Beware of Pity, and his memoir, The World of Yesterday. He eventually settled in Brazil, where in 1942 he and his wife were found dead in an apparent double suicide. Much of his work is available from Pushkin Press. Translated from the German by Will Stone.

Hats off to the translator Will Stone. His Introduction of Zweig's essay on Montaigne was thought provoking and rich with understanding of Zweig himself. This little book was a joy to read, not only because of its content, but the physical book brought me back to a time when books were a treasure to hold. So beautifully made, from the paper, to the font, to the exquisite paper of the cover and the bookmark flaps. And then of course the etching by Dali on the cover. A piece of art inside and out!

Beautiful book and well written. Made me want to jump into the complete essays, which I'm reading now.

Two amazing minds working together in a way to uncover the brilliance of Montaigne's writings

Great book, fast shipping.

Thank you to Pushkin Collection for re-publishing Stefan Zweig's biography of Montaigne. Zweig's personal, somewhat casual, yet highly informed style of writing for biography totally engaged me in Montaigne's life and also led me to a renewed wish to read the Essays sooner rather than later. In

this current age of vile and petty discourse, I enjoyed the call to searching for "knowing the self." Very little of this is in evidence in the public forum today leaving Montaigne's wish for solitude so understandable. Also his wish for travel in order to know as many people and customs different from himself and those he already knew as possible. Those who have read other of Zweig's biographies will not be surprised at the lack of citations for quotes in the text. I noted the lack of footnotes in *Marie Antoinette: The Portrait of an Average Woman*. While at first this may have irked me in this latter book, I grew not to mind it at all. And in Montaigne it really did not bother me as I knew that the source was Montaigne unless another source was mentioned, such as a letter from the king. I am only mentioning this as it is a Zweig quirk, not a publishing error. I highly recommend this as a brief and engaging introduction to the life of Montaigne and a glimpse into the *Essays*. What better service can a biography provide than to whet the appetite for the works of its subject. A copy of this book was provided by the publisher through NetGalley in return for an honest review.

I picked this up on a recent trip. First, let me say that you should get your hands (literally) on this book to see how a beautiful book is made. Pushkin Press is serious about creating wonderful pieces of art. I am a bit of a sucker for carefully done books, but this book offers more than aesthetic satisfaction. Zweig's book is short, but contains much food for thought. I find Montaigne compelling in many ways, yet badly deceived in his own quest for being an authentic human. Still, there were many insights which made me chew on significant matters. I must say that the introduction by Will Stone is wonderfully written.

Montaigne's era is very similar to our own or Stefan Zweig's epoch. Montaigne saw the invention of printing, while we discovered Internet. Montaigne lived at the end of the Renaissance, which offered mankind the great hope of a world becoming 'human'. But, the world fell back into bestiality. Montaigne never saw peace, reason or tolerance during his whole life, only a pandemonium of furor, hate, partisan frenzy and tyrannical decrees imposed by the political, ideological or religious powerful. 'Nothing was sure on this planet anymore. Everybody could lose everything every hour of the day.' Stefan Zweig saw the debacle of European civilization with its fascist regimes and two World Wars. Confronted with an environment of universal servility and rampant dementia, Montaigne looked for his own fatherland: his inner self. For Stefan Zweig, Montaigne is the protector of human dignity, of the 'free man', who stands up amidst the chaos around him: a man who doesn't want to see the diversity of the world turned into doctrinal systems; a man who keeps his personal independence. Montaigne is not a dictator of the soul, who proclaims 'Do as I say!', and for whom

the blood of thousands of human beings is nothing, as long as his cause is triumphant. He appeals for tolerance and temperance. Montaigne wrote only one book (in 3 volumes) called 'Essays'. It poses three crucial questions: Who am I? What do I know? How can I be free? There were two editions of the two first volumes. The second edition is more polished, but the first one (the Bordeaux edition) is more sincere. Stefan Zweig tells us also the story of Montaigne's family roots, his youth, his role as a secret political mediator, his wealth and also ... his misogyny. This small book is a magisterial presentation of a great writer. Not to be missed. Montaigne's 'Essays' are a must read.

I ordered it more for Stephan Zweig than Montaigne. Zweig's presentation gave me a better understanding of Montaigne. Why he wrote in the way he did. Why he focused on certain topics. Also, re-awakened me to the woman that helped edit his Essays: Marie Le Jars de Gournay.

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