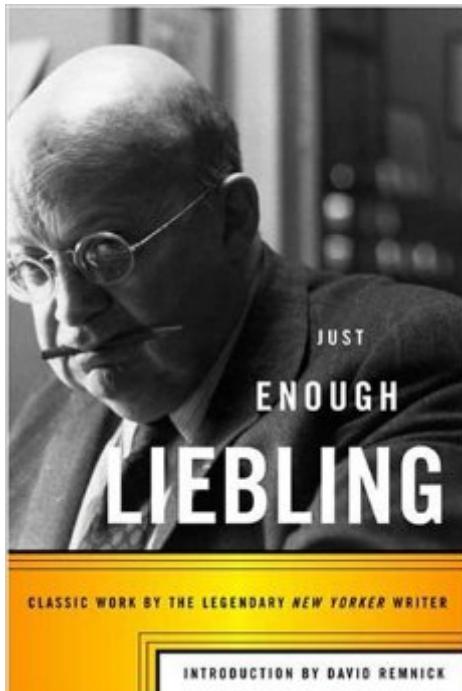


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Just Enough Liebling: Classic Work By The Legendary New Yorker Writer



Synopsis

The restaurants of the Latin Quarter and the city rooms of midtown Manhattan; the beachhead of Normandy and the boxing gyms of Times Square; the trackside haunts of bookmakers and the shadowy redoubts of Southern politicians--these are the places that A.J. Liebling shows to us in his unforgettable New Yorker articles, brought together here so that a new generation of readers might discover Liebling as if for the first time. Born a hundred years ago, Abbott Joseph "Joe" Liebling was the first of the great New Yorker writers, a colorful and tireless figure who helped set the magazine's urbane style. Today, he is best known as a celebrant of the "sweet science" of boxing or as a "feeder" who ravishes the reader with his descriptions of food and wine. But as David Remnick, a Liebling devotee, suggests in his fond and insightful introduction, Liebling was a writer bounded only by his intelligence, taste, and ardor for life. Like his nemesis William Randolph Hearst, he changed the rules of modern journalism, banishing the distinctions between reporting and storytelling, between news and art. Whatever his role, Liebling is a most companionable figure, and to read the pieces in this grand and generous book is to be swept along on a thrilling adventure in a world of confidence men, rogues, press barons and political cronies, with an inimitable writer as one's guide.

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Customer Reviews

A.J. Liebling is a quirky, funny, one-of-a-kind writer whom I adore. He's often mentioned in the same breath with Damon Runyon, and they both profile similar obscure wise guys in a clever offhanded idiom. (Runyon's prose is more caustic, and practically a new language.) But I found myself thinking

of Mark Twain, too, and even the television program *Seinfeld*. Liebling will come up with something absolutely hilarious or some wonderfully turned phrase in the midst of a lot of pleasant-enough "nothing." He has the same way of deflating the grand and inflating the trivial that Jerry, Elaine, Kramer, and George have. But even I couldn't finish one of these essays, and he's not going to be everybody's cup of tea. I almost bailed on the initial outpouring on the subject of food, but I'm glad I persevered. (I had recently read *The Sweet Science* and knew this would get better!) He does an extended riff on the idea that to really enjoy food one must have "just enough" money. With too much or too little money you won't be properly adventurous. Nice image, and unless I'm mistaken it applies to just about everything in life. There is a great range of topics Liebling writes about. Food is one, and be forewarned that his approach is artistic rather than scientific. But also Paris, World War II, boxing, New York, the press, William Randolph Hearst, General Patton, Theodore Dreiser, Sugar Ray Robinson, Stalin, the Louisiana politician Earl Long. My favorite pieces are "Quest for Mollie," about a remarkable soldier in the North African theater, and "Ahab and Nemesis," about Rocky Marciano and Archie Moore. These stories and many others are simply transcendent, they are so good.

The only reason I pick this nice volume over the LOA duo is for those who still do not know his work and do not want to plunk down more than the nice low price for this "tasting flight". Once you satisfactorily pat your mouth with the back cover, you will be reaching for the LOA volumes pretty quick, if not individual copies of the whole slate of individual volumes appearing at the very beginning of this happy volume. Joe Liebling is the other bookend of the matched set of great New Yorker journalists with Joe Mitchell. They were as different in origin as could be, except in character, skill and sensibility. Could be non-identical twins separated at birth otherwise. Liebling was a war reporter, but no blood or guts, all GI. He grasped the war as few others could, but in a way nobody else did. "Westbound Tanker" finds him on the Norwegian "Regenbue", or Rainbow, obvious from "Her lead-gray hull...streaked with rust, and her masts and funnel and deckhouses showed only a trace of paint" He was going on December 1, 1941 to visit home for the holidays as a neutral. While at sea, he was transformed into a co-belligerent on the 7th. A gourmet of food and drink of the highest order, he made a natural Francophile. Those of you reading his "Between Meals" know of his young introduction to pre-war Paris. He grasped the French as de Tocqueville had only aspired in his three month American visit. All the French I read him to for years now are astounded and warmly pleased, even at their own occasional expense. So we begin this tour with a few stories of drink, food and France -- "The primary requisite for writing well about food is a good appetite ...

Each day brings only two opportunities for field work".

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