

Annotated List of Memoirs

- Gates, Henry Louis Jr. *Colored People*. 1994. Vintage
Henry Louis Gates' moving memoir chronicles his boyhood in a segregated town in West Virginia. From its title to its evocation of what is what like to grow up in a town where everyone was Black, Gates' memoir challenges conventional notions of racial politics in the US. But the book is more than the story of a Black childhood: it is a coming of age story of a man who became one of America's leading scholars.
- Kaysen, Susanna. *Girl, Interrupted*. 1994. Vintage
Susanna Kaysen was hospitalized in a mental institution during the 1960's when unusual or aberrant behavior by girls was often considered a sign of mental illness. Her memoir challenges notions of what is normal and sane and what is not. It is alternatively funny and horrifying.
- Wolff, Tobias. *This Boy's Life*. 1989. Grove/Atlantic
After his parents divorced, Tobias Wolff moved with his beloved, impoverished, often weak mother to the state of Washington where he ends up battling his abusive stepfather. Tobias ultimately survives by using his wits and his ability to deceive. *This Boy's Life* and *The Duke of Deception* are wonderful as companion memoirs since they highlight the impossibility of identifying certainty or truth when human memory is the only source.
- Wolff, Geoffrey, *The Duke of Deception*. 1990. Vintage
Geoffrey Wolff tells the story of the divorced Wolff parents from the other side. While Tobias, his brother, went to live with his impoverished mother, Geoffrey lived a economically and emotionally volatile life with his charming and larcenous father. Both brothers grew up to be gifted writers.

Additional Memoirs to Consider

Russell Baker, *Growing Up*
Jim Barnes, *On Native Ground*
Claude Brown, *Manchild in the Promised Land*
Lan Cao, *Monkey Bridge*
Jimmy Carter, *An Hour Before Daylight*
Stephen Church, *The Guinness Book of Me*
Bill Clinton, *My Life*
Joan Didion, *The Year of Magical Thinking*
Annie Dillard, *An American Childhood*
Isak Dinesen, *Out of Africa*
Mark Doty, *Firebird*
Dave Eggers, *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*
Helen Freemont, *After Long Silence*
James Frey, *A Million Little Pieces*
Elizabeth Gold, *Brief Intervals of Horrible Sanity*
Brendan Halpin, *Losing My Faculties—A Teacher's Story*
Adam Harmon, *Lonely Soldier*

Stephen King, *On Writing*
Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts*
Annie Lamont, *Bird by Bird*
Beryl Markham, *West with the Night*
Nathan McCall, *Makes Me Wanna Holler*
Frank McCourt, *Teacher Man* and *Angela's Ashes*
William Alexander Percy, *Lanterns on the Levee: Recollections of a Planter's Son*
Ruth Reichl, *Garlic and Sapphires, Comfort Me With Apples, and Tender at the Bone*
Amy Krouse Rosenthal, *Encyclopedia of an Ordinary Life*
Gore Vidal, *Palimpsest*
Elie Wiesel, *Night*
Paramahansa Yogananda, *Autobiography of a Yogi*