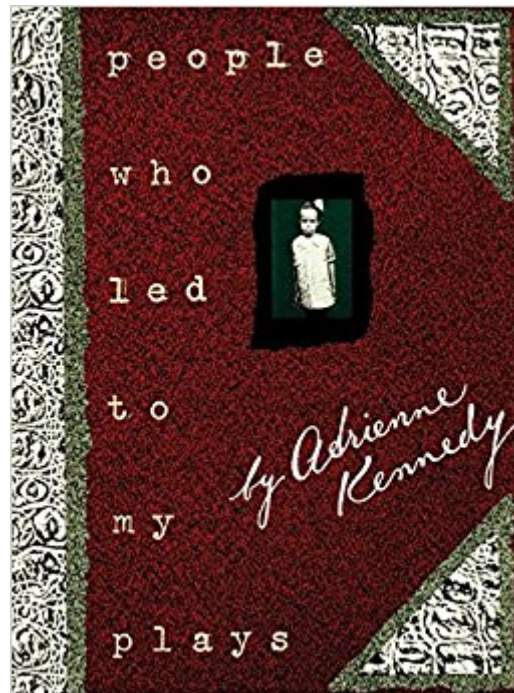




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People Who Led To My Plays



Synopsis

In this remarkable memoir, Adrienne Kennedy charts her life from growing up in Cleveland in the 1930s and 40s in a middle-class black family through marriage and motherhood and her eventual move to New York City in the 50s. Out of a sequence of deceptively spare statements emerges a complex portrait of the artist as a young woman as she examines the people and events that compelled her to be a writer.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As the bittersweet recollections of a young black growing up in Ohio in the 1940s, aspiring to be a famous writer, this scrapbook suffers from its deliberately fragmented format. Kennedy, whose *Funnyhouse of a Negro* won a 1964 Obie Award, seems to be adapting here the nonlinear style of her avant-garde plays. Hundreds of very short, titled entries ("Junior High," "My Father," "Paul Robeson," "Frank Sinatra") add up to a jumbled self-portrait of a writer slowly finding her direction. She also presents a compendium of creative artists, famous people, friends and relatives who in any way influenced her work. We get scores of brief entries on Bette Davis, Marlon Brando, Beethoven, Richard Wright, Jackson Pollock, Chopin, Duke Ellington, Socrates and dozens more. Readers with an abiding interest in Kennedy's dramatic output may find this encyclopedic approach worth the effort. Copyright 1987 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

"People Who Led to My Plays has served as a model for me in considering how one's artistic practice is rooted and thrives in the soil of the past and how an artist uses history (with a small and a large 'h') as the raw material for one's practice, molding and transforming and bringing it into the present. I thank you for your extraordinary work in unpacking black life on the stage and showing us how truly rich and strange it is." --Glenn Ligon "I have been reading and teaching People Who Led to My Plays since its first publication in 1987. At once collage, diary, memoir and annotated scrapbook, it felt miraculous then and still does. With fearless imagination and formal daring, Adrienne Kennedy has given us A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman and an American literary classic." --Margo Jefferson "Adrienne Kennedy has introduced a new form of black autobiography, one that, like her plays, will be widely imitated. Like most great artists in whose work different cultures and styles converge, she is unique." --Ishmael Reed "Just as her brilliant plays changed what was possible on the stage, Adrienne Kennedy's autobiography transformed the form. Written with a poet's insight and a dramatist's sense of form, Kennedy's autobiography is a classic--one that not only illuminates her singular work, but the world and politics that made her." --Hilton Als "People Who Led to My Plays has served as a model for me in considering how one's artistic practice is rooted and thrives in the soil of the past and how an artist uses history (with a small and a large 'h') as the raw material for one's practice, molding and transforming and bringing it into the present. I thank you for your extraordinary work in unpacking black life on the stage and showing us how truly rich and strange it is." --Glenn Ligon "I have been reading and teaching People Who Led to My Plays since its first publication in 1987. At once collage, diary, memoir and annotated scrapbook, it felt miraculous then and still does. With fearless imagination and formal daring, Adrienne Kennedy has given us A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman and an American literary classic." --Margo Jefferson "Adrienne Kennedy has introduced a new form of black autobiography, one that, like her plays, will be widely imitated. Like most great artists in whose work different cultures and styles converge, she is unique." --Ishmael Reed "Just as her brilliant plays changed what was possible on the stage, Adrienne Kennedy's autobiography transformed the form. Written with a poet's insight and a dramatist's sense of form, Kennedy's autobiography is a classic--one that not only illuminates her singular work, but the world and politics that made her." --Hilton Als

This is an excellent book! If you have read any of Adrienne Kennedy's plays, you will appreciate the content. Other than reading the plays over and over, I believe this book is the most helpful in understanding her work and the sources for her inspiration. As an autobiography of sorts, it reads

more like a journal, with her memories written throughout in the form of short sentences, pictures, and phrases. The form itself is fascinating- fragmented, like her plays. This book is so much more than it's content, which of course provides the insight you seek if you want to know about the people (and places and events...) that led to her plays. It is more because of the unique form- you can see how Ms. Kennedy shapes her stories through her collage of memories.

Superficial to put it superficially. Of no purpose or value I could discern.

"People Who Led to My Plays" by Adrienne Kennedy is one of the most engaging autobiographical works I have ever read. Kennedy walks her reader through her life up to when she wrote her first play "Funnyhouse of a Negro," and lists the many things that have influenced who she is and what she writes. Whether you're reading Kennedy's plays or not, this work will not only move you, but make you think about what has influenced and shaped your life. If you are studying Kennedy, this book is crucial to understanding her plays -- it is as though you are reading her life diaries. Her passion for experiences and the honesty with which she relates both the good and bad in life made me love reading every anecdote.

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