

MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE  
**ESSAYS**



**Front Matter**

Translation by HyperEssays.net (2020–21, Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International) · Last updated on July 6, 2021

HYPERESSAYS is a project to bring a complete hypertext edition of Michel de Montaigne's *Essays* to the web. More information at [www.hyperessays.net](http://www.hyperessays.net)

ESSAYS-0-1-20210706-215932

---

## To the Reader

A READER, this is an honest book. It warns you straight away that I wrote it only with myself and those around me in mind, never once considering what use you could have for it or how interesting it would make me look. I would not have the strength for that kind of work. I wrote it for my family and my friends so that once I am gone (which may be soon) they may find in it again remnants of my personality and thoughts, and remember me in a more complete and life-like way. Had I been seeking public attention, I would have **c** made myself look better and presented myself more carefully<sup>A</sup>. But I want you to see me as I am, in a plain, natural, and ordinary way, free of **c** pretense <sup>A</sup> and artifice. I am the one depicted here. My faults and my very self are exposed for all to see, at least as much as public conventions will let me. Had I lived among those nations, which (they say) still live under the sweet liberty of nature's primitive laws, I assure you I would easily have painted myself quite fully and quite naked. So, reader, here I am, the subject of my book, and I see no reason why you should spend your free time on so unimportant and pointless a topic. Farewell, then; from Montaigne,<sup>1</sup> **c** March 1st, 1580.<sup>2</sup>

---

### NOTES

- 1 Michel de Montaigne's estate, near Bergerac, France.
- 2 This is the date Montaigne wrote on his annotated copy of the *Essays*, the "Bordeaux Copy." The printed text shows "June 12, 1588."