

**E.M. Forster. *Two Cheers  
for  
Democracy***

A Harvest Book



## **Two Cheers for Democracy**

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# Two Cheers for Democracy

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## Two Cheers for Democracy E.M. Forster

Essays that applaud democracy's toleration of individual freedom and self-criticism and deplore its encouragement of mediocrity: "We may still contrive to raise three cheers for democracy, although at present she only deserves two."

## Two Cheers for Democracy Details

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## From Reader Review Two Cheers for Democracy for online ebook

### **Jackson Cyril says**

A gently moving collection of essays animated throughout by Forster's gentle humanism which never descends into muddle-headed mushiness nor loses sight of what he calls "the City of God". In an age when Fascism is on the ascendant and Democracy again under threat, we would do well to hear Forster's voice.

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### **Gramarye says**

E.M. Forster's literary output is more than Merchant-Ivory films might have you think. This collection of Forster's generally light-hearted but thoughtful prose from the 1930s through the 1950s records the myriad ways in which two wars and an uncertain peace affected European social, political, and literary culture. His keen-eyed observations gives contemporary readers a clear-eyed perspective on the changes wrought by the passing years both at home and abroad.

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### **Sam says**

A pleasurable, low-key book that could easily be read in an afternoon or two. I liked the shorter essays better. The Forster that speaks here is middle class and comfortable, and you imagine him sitting in a library. He is a humanist and moderate social reformer who is always trying to see things from the other person's point of view. He is curious about other cultures and places, and a "free-thinker" in the British tradition - i.e. tolerant and kind, artistic and literate, flexible, some might say complacent. In fact, nothing here seems to have much urgency at all, which is strange given the historical context of the war. The tone is almost placid next to Orwell's dispatches and journals of the same period, in which Orwell fears there is a very high chance of England being overrun either by the Germans or some homegrown variety of totalitarianism. Forster's seems almost oddly detached, as if he finds permanence in his domestic sphere, his books and music, and his ideas. He clearly dislikes showy prose; he prefers the definite to the speculative. Therefor, while there are a lot of memorable phrases and some wise things here, there is almost nothing original and nothing that would change the mind of a person in 2011, disturb or provoke.

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### **Greg says**

Essential Forster. As an essayist E.M. Forster is every bit the equal of George Orwell.

'Three Anti-Nazi Broadcasts: 1. Culture and Freedom 2. What has Germany done to the Germans? 3. What would Germany do to Us?' 1940

'George Orwell'

'The Menace to Freedom'

'Tolerance'

and 'What I Believe'

These essays and broadcasts were written of its time, on the experience of the time (1936 to 1951) and still illuminate universal principles that one can identify in any era.

The essay 'Tolerance' and 'What I Believe' are very relevant to the political climate in this era.

'What I Believe' p.75 - 84 'One must be fond of people and trust them if one is not to make a mess of life, and therefore essential that they should not let one down. They often do. The moral of which is that I must, myself, be as reliable as possible, and this I try to be. But reliability is not a matter of contract - that is the main difference between the world of personal relationships and the world of business relationships. It is a matter for the heart, which signs no documents. [ ] 'Democracy is not a Beloved Republic really, and never will be. But it is less hateful than other contemporary forms of government, and to that extent it deserves our support.'

The Three Anti-Nazi Broadcasts are very good. One aspect Forster focuses on is the comparison of censorship under the Nazis to the freedom of the Democracies. While reading, the inconsistency of banning D.H. Lawrence's writing came to mind, which Mr. Forster doesn't mention.

'Culture and Freedom' p. 43. 'So here are two of my reasons for believing that freedom is necessary for culture. The third reason concerns the general public. The public, on its side, must be free to read, to listen, to look. If it is prevented from receiving the communications which the artist sends it, it becomes inhibited, like him, though in a different way: it remains immature. And immaturity is a great characteristic of the public in Nazi Germany. If you look at a photograph of our enemies they may strike you as able and brave and formidable, even heroic. But they will not strike you as grown up. They have not been allowed to hear, to listen, or to look. Only people who have been allowed to practice freedom can have the grown-up look in their eyes.'

And here is a paragraph from the third broadcast, 'What Would Germany Do To Us?'

'In the end, they might achieve world domination and institute a culture. But what sort of culture would it be? What would they have to work with? For you cannot go on destroying lives and living processes without destroying your own life. If you continue to be greedy and dense, if you make power and not understanding your aim, if, as a French friend of mine puts it, you erect 'a pyramid of appetites on a foundation of stupidity', you kill the impulse to create. Creation is disinterested. Creation means passionate understanding. Creation lies at the heart of civilization like fire in the heart of the earth. Around it are gathered its cooler allies, criticism, the calm use of the intellect, informing the mass and moulding it into shape. The intellect is not everything - the Nazis are quite right there. But no one can insult the intellect as they do without becoming sterile and cruel. We know their cruelty. We should see their sterility if this orgy of destruction were to stop, and they turned at their Fuehrer's command to the production of masterpieces.'

There is so much more to recommend in Two Cheers for Democracy.

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### **Janice says**

i can think of few authors i would rather listen to babble on about religion and culture and literature and being nice to each other, dammit. sure, there are some essays on specific authors that i wasn't as interested in, but just to read his description of how much virginia woolf loved the act of writing balanced all that out.

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### **Alok Mishra says**

The guy writing this was an erudite, no doubts! However, I do have a few apprehensions that I would like to share with the readers of this book. First that the book contains a few obvious contradictions. I have highlighted this and many other things in the book which are ambiguous in an essay I wrote. You can read it here on my website: Two Cheers for Democracy

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## **Eric says**

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### **GONZA says**

One must be fond of people and trust them if one is not to make a mess of life, and it is therefore essential that they should?not let one down. They often do. The moral of which is that I must, myself, be as reliable as possible, and this I try to be. But reliability is not a matter of contract - that is the main difference between the world of personal relationships and the world of business relationships. It is a matter for the heart, which signs no documents. In other words, reliability is impossible unless there is a natural warmth. Most men possess this warmth, though they often have bad luck and get chilled. Most of them, even when they are politicians, want to keep faith. And one can, at all events, show one's own little light here, one's own poor little trem- bling flame, with the knowledge that it is not the only light that is shining in the darkness, and not the only one which the darkness does not comprehend. Personal relations are despised today. They are regarded as bourgeois luxuries, as products of a time of fair weather which is now past, and we are urged to get rid of them, and to dedicate ourselves to some movement or cause instead. I hate the idea of causes, and if I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend I hope I should have the guts to betray my country. Such a choice may scandalize the modern reader, and he may stretch out his patriotic hand to the telephone at once and ring up the police. It would not have shocked Dante, though. Dante places Brutus and Cassius in the lowest circle of Hell because they had chosen to betray their friend Julius Caesar rather than their country Rome. Probably one will not be asked to make such an agonizing choice. Still, there lies at the back of every creed something terrible and hard for which the worshipper may one day be required to suffer, and there is even a terror and a hardness in this creed of personal relationships, urbane and mild though it sounds. Love and loyalty to an individual can run counter to the claims of the State. When they do - down with the State, say I, which means that the State would down me.

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### **Shelley says**

These essays remind me what is missing in our current age: an erudite thoughtful man with critical thinking skills who sustains ideas far beyond the blog and tweeting crowd.

There are 10 essays here that I think are superb: Tolerance, What I Believe, Gide and George, Virginia Woolf: The Rede Lecture, The Enchafed Flood, English Prose between 1918 and 1939, In My Library, The London Library, and, The United States. The rest is a bit too arcane; these ten are the meat of the book for me.

If you wonder what kind of books intelligent people used to read, this is it. You might not find everything to your taste but the range of his interests and knowledge is impressive, as well as the depth of his humanity, all again something rare in today's world.

The decline of Western civilization is clear when you compare the level of writing in this book of essays with contemporary writing...

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## **Mark says**

I liked the first half of the book, the second once I passed into his modern English lit-crit section, was a bit thick, what with all these contemporary writers of his I never heard of & such. But the first half is full of some good thoughts, and what might be having a look at in today's new era of President Stumpy. I am sure there are heads set to boil on some accounts in coming years!

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## **Sue Law says**

A "dip and savour" book, not an end to end read. The bits I've read are enjoyable and thought-provoking.

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## **Mandy Askins says**

I had started reading this only for the "What I Believe" essay, but couldn't put it down. It is witty and insightful and I am finding myself laughing out loud while reading it. After having to read Forster for a Literature class, I am finding him to be a new favorite author of mine. He is a very fascinating man and views and ideas very close to my own.

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## **Meghan says**

Surprisingly, I really enjoyed some of these essays. "What I Believe" contains one of my favorite quotes from literature: "What is so wonderful about great literature is that it transforms the man who reads it, towards the condition of the man who wrote, and brings to birth in us also the creative impulse. Lost in the beauty where he was lost, we find more than we ever threw away, we reach what seems to be our spiritual home, and remember that it was not the speaker who was in the beginning but the Word."

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