



## Writing Home

*Alan Bennett*

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Bringing together the hilarious, revealing, and lucidly intelligent writing of one of England's best known literary figures, *Writing Home* includes the journalism, book and theater reviews, and diaries of Alan Bennett, as well as "The Lady in the Van," his unforgettable account of Miss Shepherd, a London eccentric who lived in a van in Bennett's garden for more than twenty years. This revised and updated edition includes new material from the author, including more recent diaries and his introduction to his Oscar-nominated screenplay for *The Madness of King George*. A chronicle of one of the most important literary careers of the twentieth century, *Writing Home* is a classic history of a life in letters.

## Writing Home Details

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Author : Alan Bennett

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## From Reader Review Writing Home for online ebook

### John says

A.B.'s superb powers of observation, linked with an ability to translate his thoughts into a universal language of understanding which then makes them ours, is awe inspiring. The book covers a lot of ground - childhood to the date of publication (1994) and may be the closest we get to an autobiography from him. His plays, on and off screen, extracts from his diaries and pen portraits, which include his parents, friend Russell Harty, John Gielgud, Larkin and the irrepressible Miss Shepherd (The Lady in the Van) who lived in his drive for over 20 years, make this a rich bill of fare.

One to savour rather than rush. Funny, sad, sharp and even waspish at times but always human.

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### Fiona says

My favourite AB compilation because it contains the wonderful Lady in a Van which I've had the unadulterated pleasure of seeing twice on stage (Theatre by the Lake, Keswick).

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### Polly Sands says

I enjoyed my Bennett fix. I admittedly skipped some of the book reviews at the end, but loved the diary entries, especially when he is working on projects and the fledgling Lady in the Van sections. The only thing I will say is that my version from a charity shop is slightly outdated, some of the language used in referring to people with disabilities and minority ethnic backgrounds are a bit old fashioned, not quite offensive, but a little jarring. Apart from that, the writing is a delight and he always introduces me to new and wonderful people, books and cultural happenings...

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### Ryan says

Can't say I enjoyed this one anywhere near as much as the great man's work

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### Marjorie says

This book is a lovely read. I had many chuckles and smiles while reading this. It also gives a history of his time in the arts from about the mid 1960s to now. I did not recognize many of the names but those familiar with British theater would enjoy this book even more than I.

I am a reader who likes sentences. The way he can place a word in a sentence and make the incident come to life or bring a smile I found delightful.

I enjoyed the movie, THE LADY IN THE VAN. His diary excerpts I thought were more telling, funnier and more thought provoking than the movie. I think this shows that good writing trumps pictures.

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### **Chris says**

This feels like the textbook for the advanced Alan Bennett class. However, I haven't taken the intermediate and it's a prerequisite.

I'm past the beginner stage, at least, about Bennett: part of the groundbreaking British sketch comedy troupe Beyond the Fringe, cast member of various Amnesty International shows in the 1970s, one of Britain's great playwrights and writer of several films, most notably *The Madness of King George* and *A Private Function*.

He offers invaluable insight into the craft of writing, the development of characters and also just the day-to-day routine. I enjoy books about Britain so the references to 1960s and 1970s British celebrities don't faze me, but it might to most American readers.

However, it seems a certain understanding of his works have to be reached to truly appreciate this glimpse inside them. It's an enjoyable read, but only to a point.

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### **Richard Thomas says**

The idiosyncratic authorial voice comes through on every page - pretty well on every word. A delight to own and to dip into. It is not for me a book to be read at a sitting but to be savoured and revisited as mood takes me.

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### **Mira says**

This is a really meaty tome and took me a long while to get through. It is well worth the reading hours as he writes beautifully and leaves thoughts like butterflies whirling around your head long after you've placed the book down.

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### **Alan Hughes says**

Bringing together the hilarious, revealing, and lucidly intelligent writing of one of England's best known literary figures, "Writing Home" includes the journalism, book and theater reviews, and diaries of Alan Bennett, as well as "The Lady in the Van," his unforgettable account of Miss Shepherd, a London eccentric who lived in a van in Bennett's garden for more than twenty years. This revised and updated edition includes new material from the author, including more recent diaries and his introduction to his Oscar-nominated screenplay for "The Madness of King George." A chronicle of one of the most important literary careers of the twentieth century, Writing Home is a classic history of a life in letters.

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### **Cecily says**

First volume of semi-autobiography, augmented by diaries and excerpts from other writings. Lots about the Lady in the Van (Miss Shepherd), prefaces and background to many of his plays, including a good essay about Kafka and quite a few obituaries/funeral tributes.

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### **Katie says**

I think I took two years to read this book--and notice, I still gave it four stars. The book is written in sections, a little of this (Bennett's diary entries) and a little of that (Bennett's book reviews), so you can come and go as you please.

Bennett, a British writer and playwright (think The Madness of King George and British TV shows and plays you've probably never heard of---well, at least I hadn't), has wonderful, spot-on observations about life and great stories about the theater world. Some of my favorites were about the great Shakespearean actor John Gielgud.

Of course, the best, most delightful stories/diary entries are about Miss Shepherd (aka "The Lady in the Van"). She was his closest neighbor for over 20 years: she lived in her van, which was parked in his driveway! (He let Miss Shepherd park her van there so the police would stop harassing her.) To say that she was a colorful person seems to be a bit of an understatement. I don't know how he did it.

Anyway, I think Jon could count this as a book he read too because every time I picked it up I had to read lots of passages to him.

Now I am in the mood to read it again.

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### **Joanna says**

A tricky one to rate, as it's a collection of his writings. My enjoyment of different sections was quite varied. His early diaries were fascinating, entertaining, bittersweet & very "northern". It's no great surprise that I liked these. 'The Lady in the Van' is worthy of five stars-fantastic. His 'Prefaces to Plays' and 'Filming and Rehearsing' went on for nearly 150 pages. I think these could have been cut by at least 50%. Bennett is 81 years old & as I read the book, our gap in age became more & more pronounced. At times, some of his comments & experiences seemed very dated. Many of the featured eulogies - & writings - referred to people I knew almost nothing about and, upon researching them further, found little more to enjoy in them. FAR too many references to fucking Kafka. But, throughout the entire book there was a consistent supply of wise, funny & bittersweet anecdotes & observations. Which is what Bennett does best. He also reminds me of home, which is pretty special. A national treasure? I would say so.

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### **Maccabee says**

Excellent for those who already like Bennett. Not ideal as an introduction to him.

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### **Bob says**

Hilariously funny and brilliant collection of essays, literary criticism, diary excerpts and other short writing from a British comedian and playwright that I really ought to have known by name, but did not despite having heard of a number of plays and films which he wrote. Most recently, *The History Boys* ran on Broadway for half of 2006 to considerable acclaim, forcing me [though I did not see it] it to reconsider my rule that no play called anything Boys is worth seeing - perhaps I can still hold the line at the spelling "Boyz".

One of the most moving and fascinating segments is a description of a more or less insane old woman who had nowhere to live but a small van type of automobile (that didn't actually run) whom Bennett, through a combination of charity and inertia that I bet we can all recognize, allowed to park her vehicle and live in it in his tiny London front garden for the last 15 years of her life.

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### **Nicola Pierce says**

As it is a collection of different types of writings it is only natural to admit that I enjoyed some parts much more than others. However, this is the first time that I've read AB and am definitely interested in reading more by him. As a reader I enjoyed both his sense of humour and sense of justice and, as a writer, I thoroughly appreciated his honesty.

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