



A Life in Letters

By F. Scott Fitzgerald

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A Life in Letters By F. Scott Fitzgerald

A vibrant self-portrait of an artist whose work was his life.

In this new collection of F. Scott Fitzgerald's letters, edited by leading Fitzgerald scholar and biographer Matthew J. Bruccoli, we see through his own words the artistic and emotional maturation of one of America's most enduring and elegant authors. *A Life in Letters* is the most comprehensive volume of Fitzgerald's letters -- many of them appearing in print for the first time. The fullness of the selection and the chronological arrangement make this collection the closest thing to an autobiography that Fitzgerald ever wrote.

While many readers are familiar with Fitzgerald's legendary "jazz age" social life and his friendships with Ernest Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, Edmund Wilson, and other famous authors, few are aware of his writings about his life and his views on writing. Letters to his editor Maxwell Perkins illustrate the development of Fitzgerald's literary sensibility; those to his friend and competitor Ernest Hemingway reveal their difficult relationship. The most poignant letters here were written to his wife, Zelda, from the time of their courtship in Montgomery, Alabama, during World War I to her extended convalescence in a sanatorium near Asheville, North Carolina. Fitzgerald is by turns affectionate and proud in his letters to his daughter, Scottie, at college in the East while he was struggling in Hollywood.

For readers who think primarily of Fitzgerald as a hard-drinking playboy for whom writing was effortless, these letters show his serious, painstaking concerns with creating realistic, durable art.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Organized chronologically, this correspondence--edited by eminent Fitzgerald scholar Brucoli and freelance writer, Baughman--offers an accessible self-portrait of the writer (1896-1940). Early letters to his editor, Maxwell Perkins, and friends, Edmund Wilson and Ernest Hemingway, document Fitzgerald's devotion to craft, exemplified by *The Great Gatsby* (1925), as well as the novelist's ever-present financial problems, which kept him churning out short stories for the magazine market. Letters to his wife, Zelda--when she was hospitalized for mental illness--detail the destruction of their marriage. Fitzgerald felt it was caused by Zelda's problems, while she blamed Fitzgerald's alcoholism (a letter giving her version is included). A bitter letter Fitzgerald wrote to their daughter, Scottie, accuses Zelda of wrecking his health and talent. Despite his lack of perspective and his difficult life, Fitzgerald comes across, unsurprisingly, as warm, witty and effervescent.

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From Library Journal

With a series of definitive editions of his novels currently in production and the recent release of a major biography (Scott Fitzgerald, *LJ* 4/1/94), the Fitzgerald renaissance is on. Although collections of Fitzgerald's letters have appeared before, the intent of this assemblage is to unfurl Scott's life through his private words. To that end, these missives, which range from brief telegrams to lengthy gospels, are divided into five sections by years and major episodes in Scott's life, e.g., "Europe, *The Great Gatsby*: 1924-1930." Also included throughout are facsimiles of several of the originals. The surprisingly pleasant tone of the letters belie all the horrors Fitzgerald had stored up in his ghostly heart, including the alcoholism and madness lurking backstage. Essential reading for a full understanding of Fitzgerald as an artist and a man, this collection should be purchased by serious American literature collections.

Michael Rogers, "Library Journal"

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From [Booklist](#)

There's a bit of a Fitzgerald resurgence going on what with Jeffrey Meyers' excellent new biography, and now this, the first collection of Fitzgerald's letters to be published in 30 years. Brucoli is a productive and enthusiastic Fitzgerald maven, having edited collections of Fitzgerald's poems and stories as well as critical literature and a collection of Zelda Fitzgerald's writings before putting together this utterly fascinating volume. Fitzgerald was a profoundly literary man who wrote remarkably forceful and revealing letters. He's sly and charming, blunt and cocky, insecure and ambitious, and capable of a bone-chilling objectivity about everyone, even those closest to him. Naturally, the most compelling letters analyze his catastrophic marriage. Zelda's severe mental illness placed a tremendous emotional, financial, spiritual, and artistic burden on Fitzgerald, and his letters to various psychiatrists and friends disclose just how tangled up he and Zelda were and how much it impacted his writing. His stern yet concerned letters to his daughter, Scottie, are also of great interest. On the more professional front are Fitzgerald's detailed letters to Maxwell Perkins, Edmund Wilson, John O'Hara, and Ernest Hemingway. In all, this is a powerful form of autobiography. *Donna Seaman*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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