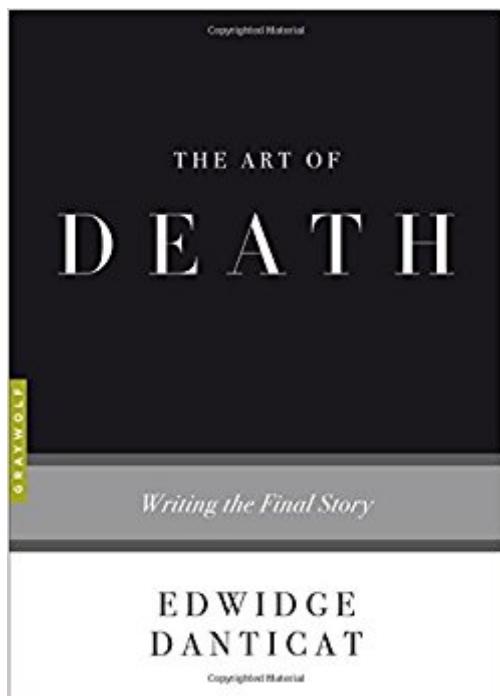


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# The Art Of Death: Writing The Final Story



## Synopsis

A moving reflection on a subject that touches us all, by the bestselling author of *Claire of the Sea Light* Edwidge Danticat's *The Art of Death: Writing the Final Story* is at once a personal account of her mother dying from cancer and a deeply considered reckoning with the ways that other writers have approached death in their own work. "Writing has been the primary way I have tried to make sense of my losses," Danticat notes in her introduction. "I have been writing about death for as long as I have been writing." The book moves outward from the shock of her mother's diagnosis and sifts through Danticat's writing life and personal history, all the while shifting fluidly from examples that range from Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* to Toni Morrison's *Sula*. The narrative, which continually circles the many incarnations of death from individual to large-scale catastrophes, culminates in a beautiful, heartrending prayer in the voice of Danticat's mother. A moving tribute and a work of astute criticism, *The Art of Death* is a book that will profoundly alter all who encounter it.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"This book is a kind of prayer for her mother — an act of mourning and remembrance, a purposeful act of grieving. . . . Danticat writes beautifully about fellow writers, dissecting their magic and technique with a reader's passion and a craftsman's appraising eye. . . . As a grieving daughter, she wants to understand how others have grappled with

this essential fact of human existence; and as a writer Æ¢â ¬â ¢ a Æ¢â ¬Æœsentence-maker,Æ¢â ¬â ¢ in the words of a DeLillo character Æ¢â ¬â ¢ she wants to learn how to use language to try to express the inexpressible, to use her art to mourn.Æ¢â ¬Â•Æ¢â ¬â ¢ The New York TimesÆ¢â ¬Å“Danticat taps into such tough subject matter . . . with a trickless, spellbinding clarity. . . . This small book is a bracingly clear-eyed take on its subject.Æ¢â ¬Â•Æ¢â ¬â ¢ The Boston GlobeÆ¢â ¬Å“DanticatÆ¢â ¬â ¢s is a memoir written in a manner akin to the circular, overlapping and overwhelming processes of grief and mourning; she layers her story with other poems, memoirs, novels and essays about death, scaling the personal to wider-ranging political and ecological catastrophes. . . . Deeply felt.Æ¢â ¬Â•Æ¢â ¬â ¢ Los Angeles TimesÆ¢â ¬Å“The Art of Death offers an inspired syllabus of DanticatÆ¢â ¬â ¢s own design. . . . WhatÆ¢â ¬â ¢s important about reading great writing about death Æ¢â ¬â ¢ or in the case of The Art of Death, reading about reading about it Æ¢â ¬â ¢ is that it teaches us how to live. Rather than shy away from these books, we should turn to them in all seasons.Æ¢â ¬Â•Æ¢â ¬â ¢ Chicago TribuneÆ¢â ¬Å“There is, after all, no more universal experience for humans, other than birth, and that is, in some ways, what this beautiful book feels like; it is an offering, almost, a renewal about the ways in which we think about the unthinkable, force ourselves to confront the dark in order to live with light in our lives. It is elegant and thoughtful, and a fascinating meditation on the thing that brings us together.Æ¢â ¬Â•Æ¢â ¬â ¢ Nylon Æ¢â ¬Å“ItÆ¢â ¬â ¢s unusual for a craft book to make such an emotional impact, but The Art of Death shows readersÆ¢â ¬â ¢through the words of others and through DanticatÆ¢â ¬â ¢s ownÆ¢â ¬â ¢how itÆ¢â ¬â ¢s done.Æ¢â ¬Â•Æ¢â ¬â ¢ Star Tribune (Minneapolis) Æ¢â ¬Å“In The Art of Death, Danticat writes clearly and judiciously about a subject that is challenging for both writers and people to face directly. Her range and grasp of literary references is wide and powerful.Æ¢â ¬Â•Æ¢â ¬â ¢ Milwaukee Journal SentinelÆ¢â ¬Å“Consider [The Art of Death] a master class in literature and a guidebook for the most universal human experience.Æ¢â ¬Â•Æ¢â ¬â ¢ BUST Magazine Æ¢â ¬Å“A haunting heart-breaking book that illuminates the artfulness in writing about death as well as DanticatÆ¢â ¬â ¢s own genius at conjuring up powerful emotions.Æ¢â ¬Â•Æ¢â ¬â ¢ Literary HubÆ¢â ¬Å“Remarkably rich. . . . This is a volume that respectfully and brilliantly draws in astute observations about scores of great writers and their relationship with death. More important, the skill and tact [Danticat] employs in bringing outside texts into her narrative should be a required roadmap that will reward inquisitive readers for years to come.Æ¢â ¬Â•Æ¢â ¬â ¢ PopMatters Æ¢â ¬Å“For a subject thatÆ¢â ¬â ¢s so daunting to tackle, Danticat manages to distill death down to its core elements. . . . The penultimate section of The Art of Death culminates with a prayer. . . [that] manages to accomplish everything Danticat

does throughout *The Art of Death*: leave you wanting more, while knowing in your heart that what you were given was just enough. *Miami Rail* literary reach is impressive—especially so in a book that spans fewer than 200 pages. . . . *The Art of Death* overflows with life, quietly but insistently inspiring anyone reading it to make good use of what remains of that precious gift. *Shelf Awareness* “The Art of Death is a rare blend of criticism and memoir, and it reaches a breathtakingly touching conclusion in the last chapter.” *Garrand Conley, Slice Magazine* “The author lends a deeply personal touch to this study. . . . Danticat takes on an unpleasant topic with sensitivity and passion.” *Kirkus Reviews*, starred review “In a series of linked essays on overlapping topics such as suicide, close calls, and how we relate to catastrophic events, she both shows how great writers make death meaningful, and explores her own raw grief over her mother’s death. This slim volume wraps literary criticism, philosophy, and memoir into a gracefully circling whole, echoing the nature of grief as ‘circles and circles of sorrow.’” *Publishers Weekly*

Edwidge Danticat is the author of many books, most recently *Claire of the Sea Light* and *Brother, I’m Dying*. She is a two-time finalist for the National Book Award, and has received the National Book Critics Circle Award and other honors.

The book got a great review in the Boston Globe... i am enjoying it somewhat, but do feel a little disappointed -- it's not exactly what i expected.

A very moving book. I highly recommend it to anyone who has recently lost a parent. This book makes you think more about life and how we must all prepare for death.

Loved it.

Excellent book

This is a difficult book to describe. It is simultaneously an exploration of death in literature, a meditation on the recent death of her mother and a consideration of her own mortality--and also is a bit about Haitian Americans. Danticat is one of the best American writers. She's a US citizen of Haitian origins, living in New York City. Her mother's life was a kind of connection between Danticat

and her Haitian roots. If you have read her other books, you will know that her books pack a powerful emotional content, and I think this is the most powerful yet. Keep an eye on this writer, the Nobel Prize could be lurking in her future--that's a guess. It's almost impossible to convey the wonderful relationship between mother and daughter. The mother had a very strong Christian faith, and was full of family memory and Haitian folklore--and proud of having a daughter who writes books. It's also difficult to describe how Danticat mixes her own professional life as a writer with her Haitian roots. Some of her mother's folk wisdom is written in Kreyol (that's the Haitian spelling) and you can almost hear the old woman talk to her daughter. There is also a strong literary element, as you might expect from a novelist. She pulls in Tolstoy and other writers and how they wrote death and sometimes, how they regarded it. This mix of the personal and the literary, of literary death and real human mortality may sound dry and academic. I did not find it that way, but rather as a very powerful exploration of mortality generally and within the family. It's a book about death, but not sad or sorrowful. It's an intensely human book, warm and passionate. And I recommend it highly.

A truly beautiful, elegiac meditation on death. Edwidge Danticat deftly weaves her own personal experience (her mother's death, the earthquake in Haiti) into a thoughtful work on the nature of death and dying. She approaches the subject with both a reflection and literature (referencing works by such masters as Toni Morrison, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, C.S. Lewis, Joan Didion and Anne Sexton). It is both moving, thought-provoking, and heart-rending. This shows how she can both narrate and illuminate a subject that is filled with such mourning and yet this book is both insightful and hopeful.

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