

Bird by Bird by Anne LaMott
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In Defense of Giving the Bird

Reviewed by Carolyn Howard-Johnson, award-winning author of *This is the Place* and *Harkening: A Collection of Stories Remembered* and *The Frugal Book Promoter*

My goodness! Who would have guessed that one slim little volume about writing could cause so much controversy in the few years since it has been published.

Take a moment to browse the reviews for *Bird by Bird* on Amazon and you'll see what I mean. I feel compelled to defend it.

Anne Lamott's national bestseller does not promise a complete course in advanced writing. The subtitle says "SOME Instructions on Writing and LIFE." What you see is what you get.

This book is a perfect introduction to writing for beginning writers just as, I suspect, LaMott's courses are. More advanced writers should get out their Hi-liters and pay attention not so much to what she says but how she says it. It also wouldn't hurt to look at her self-deprecating humor (I don't see where these readers are seeing all that self-absorption stuff--I truly don't!) and her honesty.

Could some of this be professional jealousy? This is a book that gives what it promises and more! And yes, some of the advice is similar to advice that has been given by others. Writers' books are sort of a genre of their own -- in the vein of King's and others. A little memoir, a little humor, a little advice. How much new can be said about how to write anyway?

Those who already have this book in their library may want to go back and reread it. I found that I saw different things in it after a few years honing my skills that I did when I first read it. Writers or wannabe writers should find this a savory little book to be read a little at a time, bird by bird.

(Carolyn Howard-Johnson's first book, *This is the Place* is the winner of eight awards. Her second, *Harkening*, won the Red Sky Press Award and two others. She admits to loving PR almost as much as writing and her book *The Frugal Book Promoter: How to Do What Your Publisher Won't*, which won USA Book News' Best Professional Book 2004 and Book Publicists of Southern California's Irwin Award. Learn more at <http://CarolynHowardJohnson.com> or e-mail her at HoJoNews@aol.com.)