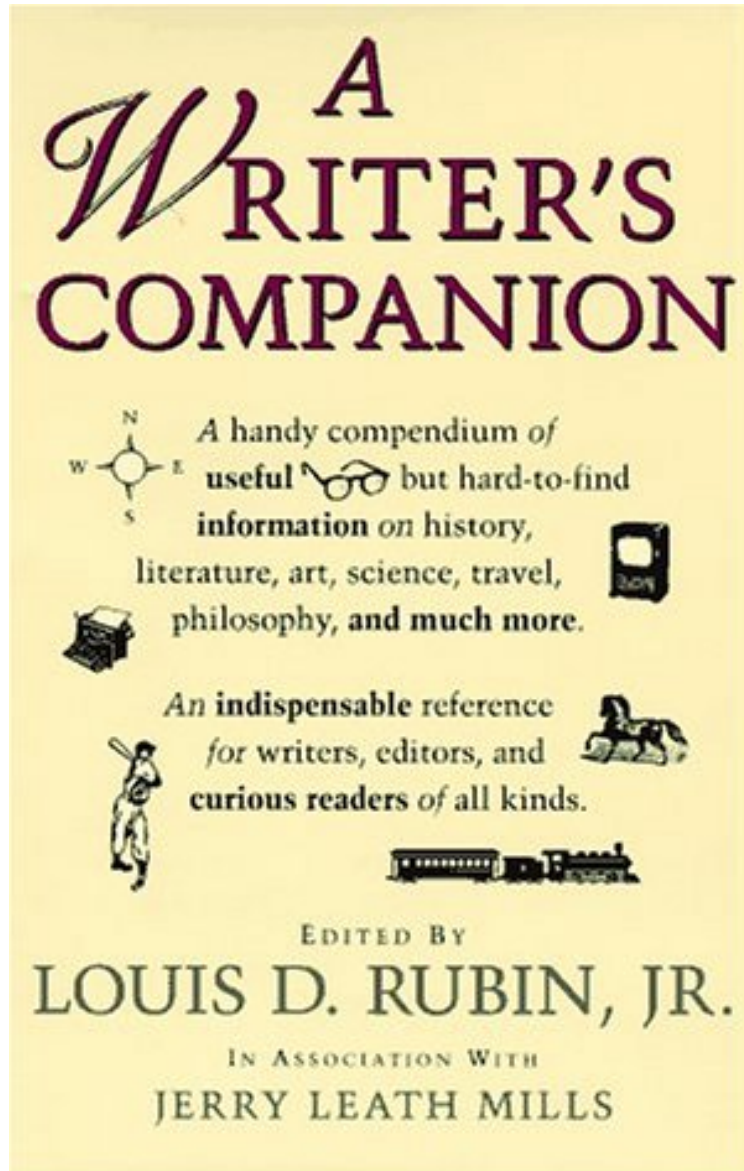


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A Writer's Companion

From Louis D Rubin

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From Louis D Rubin : A Writer's Companion before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Writer's Companion:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. close, but not quite an indispensable reference workBy A CustomerI enjoyed reading this book very much. Itscontents are varied and exhaustive, yet quick.However this book can not stand on the reference shelf alongside a good almanac, or the "New York Public Library Desk Reference".In terms of

its contents the book is erratic. Some sections like "Native American Tribes", and "Prominent Members of Congress" feel complete, that is, the list is both extensive in regards to both number and individual detail. Other areas require either more entries (the entire sports section) or the individual entries each need a bit more info ("A guide to the Ruins"). This book is meant to be a quick and easy reference for information of interest to writers. However I believe that most will use the book more for free-time reading for enjoyment rather than as an invaluable information resource.

A collection of lists for authors, editors and readers provides information about sixty-six subjects.

From Library Journal For this companion, Rubin, editor, distinguished scholar, and, most recently, novelist (*The Heat of the Sun*, LJ 9/1/95) excluded information found easily in the *World Almanac* and *Roget's* but otherwise included miscellaneous information that he and some 55 other writers thought would be helpful and browsable. Their assemblage of information, meant to be "of particular use to writers and editors," has 19 sections (e.g., "Sports," "The Animal Kingdom") divided into 66 subsections (e.g., "Pennant Contenders," "The Pro Quarterbacks"). Like many companions, the book includes unique lists and is fun to browse. However, its content is not as interesting or as useful as that of such books as *The People's Almanac* or the *Book of Lists*. This offering would be more useful in the home or office than the library. Peter Dollard, *Alma Coll. Lib., Mich.* Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. From *Booklist* An assessment of *A Writer's Companion* will most likely depend upon the setting in which it is used. Its two Library of Congress subject headings sum up the options. In a library, especially one with a reasonably good reference collection, the subject heading "Literary curiosia--Handbooks, manuals, etc." characterizes it well. If, on the other hand, one is an author or editor working outside a library, then the other heading fits: "Handbooks, vade-mecums, etc." Rubin explains that this book is "not designed to replace specialized reference sources" but "gather[s] material . . . in sufficient detail, on a variety of topics--topics about which, from my own experience and that of others, it seemed to me that writers and editors would find useful to have information available within the covers of a single volume." In the absence of an index, the primary point of access to the book is the table of contents, an outline of its 19 topical chapters. Broad topical areas covered include transportation, architecture, music, literature and language, religion and folklore, psychoanalysis, philosophy, gastronomy, and sports. The most thoroughly developed chapters are those that apply to the arts, history, and transportation/travel. Each section is a list, generally briefly annotated, of something--for example, downtown hotels in American cities, historical battles, great architectural works, notable sculptors, famous operas, current slang, popular radio shows, ancient deities, professional quarterbacks, or "some reference books that writers use." This last chapter is an ironic coda; like the references at the conclusion of each subsection, it cites numerous specialized sources that in almost every case outperform the lists in *A Writer's Companion*. Yet writers should be wary of its recommendations of superseded editions of *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*, the *Columbia Encyclopedia*, and the *Times Atlas of the World*. One cannot deny that a certain delight can be had by browsing through a list of occupations famous writers have filled, a list of famous cats, or statements of immutable laws in science and other fields. This book, much like the *The People's Almanac Presents the Book of Lists* (Little, Brown, 1993), can be great fun to browse. However, neither is a reference work of choice for libraries, especially not *A Writer's Companion*, most of whose sections have authoritative, more comprehensive, more informative book-length counterparts in reference collections. From the Back Cover In *A Writer's Companion*, Louis D. Rubin, Jr., has drawn on his years of accumulated wisdom - as well as the advice of some fifty prominent writers from various fields - to put together in a single volume a vast array of information. Organized in such a way as to make it exceptionally easy to use, and enhanced by Rubin's graceful and witty prose, *A Writer's Companion* will merit a place on the desk of every serious wordsmith. It is also a book that will bring endless hours of pleasure to anyone who enjoys reading simply for the sake of gaining new knowledge. As Casey Stengel said, "You could look it up".