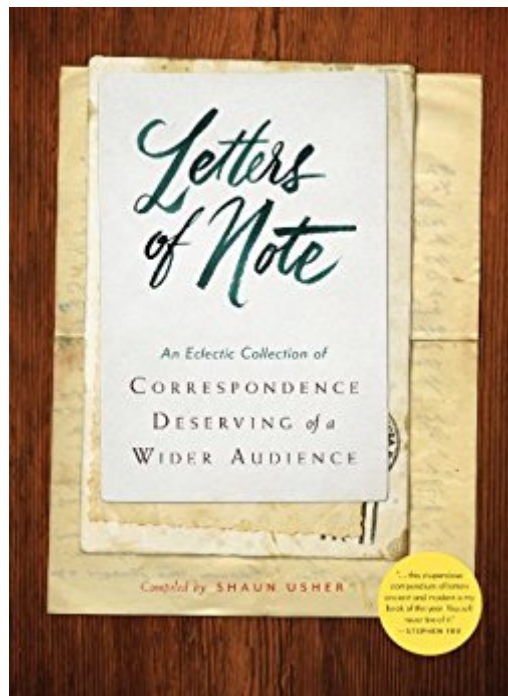


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# Letters Of Note: Volume 1: An Eclectic Collection Of Correspondence Deserving Of A Wider Audience



## Synopsis

This spectacular collection of more than 125 letters offers a never-before-seen glimpse of the events and people of history—the brightest and best, the most notorious, and the endearingly everyday. Entries include a transcript of the letter; a short contextual introduction; and, in 100 cases, a captivating facsimile of the letter itself. The artfulness of Shaun Usher's eclectic arrangement creates a reading experience rich in discovery. Mordant, hilarious, poignant, enlightening—surprise rewards each turn of the page. Colorfully illustrated with photographs, portraits, and relevant artworks, *Letters of Note* is an instant classic.

## Book Information

File Size: 79591 KB

Print Length: 352 pages

Publisher: Chronicle Books LLC (May 6, 2014)

Publication Date: May 6, 2014

Language: English

ASIN: B00IPYLUO8

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Not Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #28,284 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #1 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Arts & Photography > Photography > Photo Essays #1 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Crafts, Hobbies & Home > Antiques & Collectibles > Paper Ephemera #3 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Literature & Fiction > Essays & Correspondence > Letters & Correspondence

## Customer Reviews

What an incredible book! *LETTERS OF NOTE*, collected by Shaun Usher, consists of 125 letters-- if I counted correctly-- from many different people and times. The book is big enough and certainly beautiful enough to make that dubious qualification of suitable for a coffee table. Mr. Usher often includes with the letters full-page portraits of the writers, an actual reproduction of the letter, handwritten or typed or in whatever other form of the original letter as the case may be, along with the printed letters and a short paragraph about what occasioned the letter. This is one of those

books that you can open anywhere and read a terrific letter. The first one I read was one from Bette Davis to her daughter responding to what she had written about Davis in her memoir *MY MOTHER'S KEEPER*. (Fortunately not every letter in the collection contains so much venom although Flannery O'Connor's may run a close second.) I guess the lady wasn't always acting in her movies. The letter I just finished is a note from Oscar Wilde to Bernulf Clegg explaining his remark that "All art is quite useless." Part of his beautiful letter reads as follows: "A work of art is useless as a flower is useless. A flower blossoms for its own joy. We gain a moment of joy by looking at it." In Queen Elizabeth's letter to President Eisenhower, she encloses her recipe for drop scones that she had promised him. Mary Stuart sends a letter to the brother of her ex-husband hours before she is to be beheaded: "thanks be to God, I scorn death and vow that I meet it innocent of any crime." One wonders how anyone at the *NEW YORKER* magazine could have not hired the twenty-three-year-old Eudora Welty after reading her charming, funny letter-- but they did. "I am a southerner, from Mississippi, the nation's most backward state. .

I do not regularly write reviews about books as I believe the act of reading to be an intimate experience. When I read a book, the voice I hear in my head is mine and as such, places me, the reader, in the world of the written words. That fact colors the experience in a way that is wholly different than passively watching people act in TV shows, movies or live on stage. Given that, the book "Letters of Note" has quickly become one of my favorite reads. This collection of letters is so much more than a simple collection of letters. The content runs the gamut from the annals of human history. I'm not going to review the various letters but I will say that this collection is akin to the ultimate mix tape. Reading from one letter to the next, I get a Forrest Gump box of chocolates feeling because "you never know what you're gonna get." It could be a love letter from Kathryn Hepburn to a Spencer Tracy who, at the time had been dead for 18 years, a letter to the newspaper from Jack the Ripper along with half a kidney from one of his victims (he claimed to have eaten the other half) or a letter to the London Times telling the sad story of Joseph Merritt, aka the Elephant Man, seeking a place for him to live. I recently watched Benjamin Netanyahu's speech to congress pleading with America to not allow Iran to continue on their path to developing nuclear weapons. That same day, I read a letter from Albert Einstein to Harry Truman informing him where the best uranium is in the world and how to go about getting it. Later in life, Einstein said that this letter was his biggest regret. This is a life changing book that you must read. I've already had quite a few people asking me if they can borrow it when I am done.

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