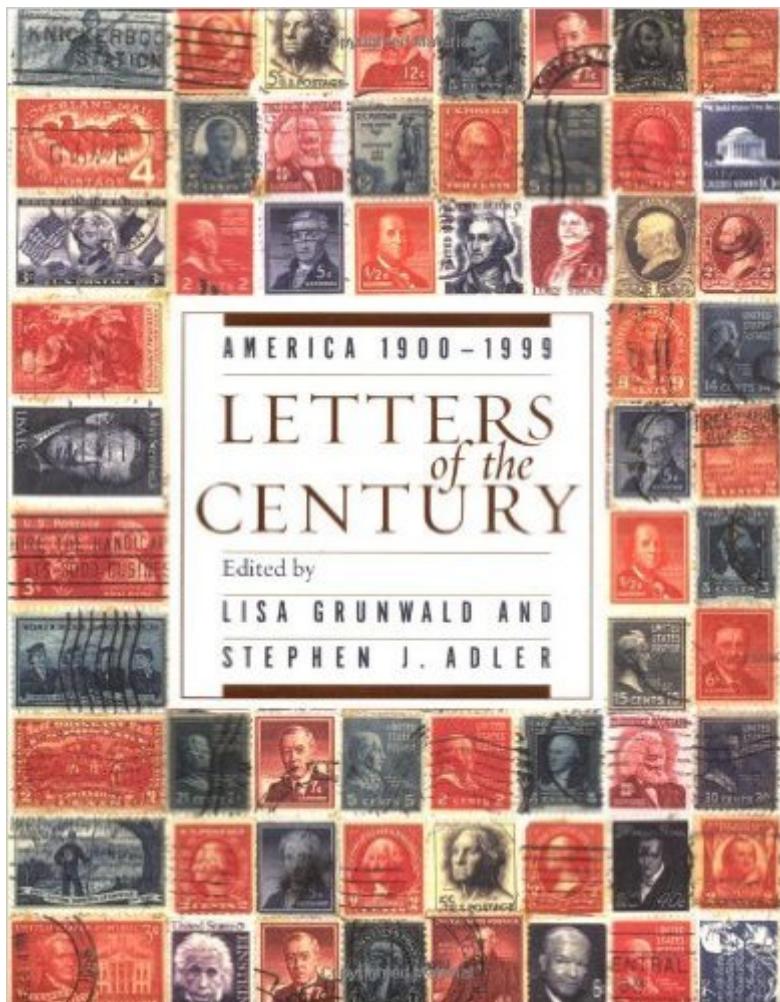


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# Letters Of The Century: America 1900-1999



## Synopsis

"Immediate and evocative, letters witness and fasten history, catching events as they happen," write Lisa Grunwald and Stephen J. Adler in their introduction to this remarkable book. In more than 400 letters from both famous figures and ordinary citizens, Letters of the Century encapsulates the people and places, events and trends that shaped our nation during the last 100 years. Here is Mark Twain's hilarious letter of complaint to the head of Western Union, an ecstatic letter from a young Charlie Chaplin upon receiving his first movie contract, Einstein's letter to Franklin Roosevelt warning about atomic warfare, Mark Rudd's "generation gap" letter to the president of Columbia University during the student riots of the 60s, and a letter from young Bill Gates imploring hobbyists not to share software so that innovators can make some money...In these pages, our century's most celebrated figures become everyday people and everyday people become part of history. Here is a veteran's wrenching letter left at the Vietnam Wall, a poignant correspondence between two women trying to become mothers, a heart-breaking letter from an AIDS sufferer telling his parents how he wants to be buried, an indignant e-mail from a PC user to his on-line server... "Letters," write Grunwald and Adler, "give history a voice." Arranged chronologically by decade, illustrated with over 100 photographs, Letters of the Century creates an extraordinary chronicle of our history, through the voices of the men and women who have lived its greatest moments.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

If you love history this book will give you an idea of every day life from both the famous and the

every day person. The letter from Jackie to Lyndon Johnson was especially moving as were the letters for Dec. 7 1944. This book truely shows how far we have come as a civilization and the importance of every man!

I originally purchased this book as a gift. I kept the book and then bought 2 more! What a wonderful history of everyday people and even very famous people. This book is not some historians own spin on what they consider important. Very personal revealing honest letters that expose you to human emotion unlike anything you have ever read. Reading this you will experience every feeling possible. The letter Jesse Helms wrote to a grieving mother will futher exposes him as the meanspirited clueless person that he really is. This book will not disappoint you. Do yourself a favor and buy it now.

Anyone with a genuine nose for gossip and history, this is the book for you. Not only are the historic letters of political and cultural fascination but the nature of the letters themselves, really let you in on a closed personal world. The act of transcribing events with only the one person in mind ensures that individuality and uniqueness are qualities most evident in this collection. The span of history that this book covers marks the most striking events of the century. It is a must for anyone with a serious interest in American history.

I concur with most of the points addressed by earlier reviewers, and found this book to be one of the best about history that I've read. Many of the letters were eye-opening, detailing facets of America's history of which I was unaware. As an example, I found the letter detailing the My Lai Massacre both illuminating and horrifying. The letter from Roosevelt to 'The President of The United States in 1956' honoring the first American soldier to give his life in WWII is one of my favorites, along with the letter to the Warner Brothers from Groucho Marx that an earlier reviewer mentioned. A few additional thoughts: 1. The choices of letters from the 1990s were the weakest of any decade. I suppose that's to be expected in the days of e-mail, chatrooms, and the demise of the letter writer, but I'm sure there were better selections than one detailing the results of testing performed on the stained blue dress worn by Monica Lewinsky, or the letter to a Star Trek fan. 2. The majority of the letters related to negative aspects of the century, which while powerful to read made it a bit depressing to read more than 30-50 pages at a sitting. As the various forms of media have always realized, bad news makes for better stories than good news. I wish, however, that there would have been more letters evincing triumphs, humor, and/or optimism. Such letters were in evidence, but not in abundance. 3. I

agree with an earlier reviewer that noted the liberal bias of the letters selected. There appeared to be an inordinate amount of 'coming out' selections and letters voicing disapproval of the System. They were important letters, however, that gave me a different view of the country's past.<sup>4</sup> One of my favorite history-related books is *A People's History of The United States* by Zinn. This book of letters reminded me of that text, required in a college history class. Overall, I strongly recommend this collection to anyone interested in the history of 20th century America.

This book is a wonderful collection of stories from every year of the 20th century. The authors of the letters are famous people and ordinary citizens. These letters express every human emotion love, loss, triumph, joy, and hope. This book is a pleasure to read. My favorite story is about a young woman writing to her best friend about her bad marriage. Her husband is physically abusive to her and her son. She yearns for the courage to escape and become an independent woman which she eventually does. Another story by a young man who actually survived the sinking of the Titanic. He writes his girlfriend about his experience of getting off the ship and waiting to be rescued. There is a letter by a woman in Hawaii to her brother in Ohio. She recounted witnessing the bombing of Pearl Harbor during World War 2. She recounts going to a bomb shelter and depicts the camaraderie among the people of the time. There is a Dear John letter addressed to Ernest Hemingway from a nurse who cared for him while he was wounded in World War 1. He loved her but their relationship was a mere fling to her. She lets him down gently. This relationship inspired Hemingway to write the novel *The Sun Also Rises*. There is another letter written by a young unwed pregnant woman in the 1930's seeking advice from a doctor. Her father has no knowledge of the pregnancy and her mother is dead. She has nobody to turn to and her desperate plea for guidance is very touching. There is another poignant letter written by the sister of a Vietnam Vet who died from lymphoma as a result of exposure to Agent Orange. She expresses her disbelief, loss and sorrow to an anti war group. There are several stories written by expectant parents to their unborn children. Each letter is filled with anticipation and hope. Buy this book. You will never be able to put it down.

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