ForeWord Reviews

REFERENCE

A Writer's San Francisco: A Guided Journey for the Creative Soul
Eric Maisel
Paul Madonna, illustrator
New World Library
978-1-57731-546-9
(Sep 6, 2006)

Some places have a life of their own, places that deeply touch people, becoming a piece of what defines them. For this author, San Francisco is such a place. His book is no travel guide, nor could it even be termed a travel book; it is a glimpse into the heart of the historic city and the places and characters that make it so artistically distinctive. The journey begins at the author's home and details how he came to be in, and so enraptured by, San Francisco. As the excursion branches out to explore more of the city, the scope of the work expands as well. Seamlessly incorporated into the narrative are motivational and encouraging words for the writer offered from Maisel's vast professional knowledge.

"I often do the odd thing," he writes, "of having folks in my online trainings start out their lesson responses with the following affirmation: 'My creative work and my creative life matter to me.' You try to say thirty consecutive times that you and your work matter even if you don't believe it), and see if you don't change for the better."

A prolific writer of more than thirty fiction and nonfiction works, including *Coaching the Artist Within* and *A Writer's Paris*, Maisel works as a creative coach and a creativity coach trainer with master's degrees in counseling and creative writing and a doctorate in counseling psychology.

The expedition continues as it winds through every nook and cranny of the city; the restaurants, cafés, parks, and museums, bringing to vibrant life the myriad quirky and creative people who color it. There's Carol the schizophrenic poet, and the artist who sits all day in the same café but speaks to no one. Even the author's landlord is included, the one who spends his evenings lubricated and dancing naked outdoors. Depicted as well are the ghosts and specters of the city, artistic giants like Jack London, Rudyard Kipling, and Mark Twain, who lived within its boundaries in the past and produced some of the country's finest literature.

A Writer's San Francisco is accompanied by illustrations by a successful artist and adult satire cartoonist, whose colored pencil drawings grace cover and chapters. The book is offered,

Maisel says, as “a quixotic series of site-specific lessons for writers.”

“Get up each day,” he advises, “dress warmly cities are chilly in the morning), head straight to your first café, have your first cup of coffee and your pumpkin muffin or *brioche* or *kolache*), and begin writing.”

The soulful drawings, the exquisite use of language, and the uninhibited writing style combine to make this work a virtual experience of the city with the added benefit of useful writing insights.

Donna Russo Morin