

# Susan Sontag: Her Life and Work



## Sontag: Her Life and Work by Benjamin Moser

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

Language	: English
File size	: 68683 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
X-Ray	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
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Susan Sontag (1933-2004) was an American writer, critic, and intellectual who made significant contributions to the fields of literature, culture, and photography. Her work is characterized by its intelligence, originality, and willingness to engage with complex and controversial topics.

## Early Life and Education

Susan Sontag was born on January 16, 1933, in New York City. Her father, Jack Rosenblatt, was a fur trader, and her mother, Mildred Jacobsen, was a teacher. Sontag grew up in an intellectually stimulating environment, and she developed a passion for reading and writing at a young age.

Sontag attended the University of Chicago and Harvard University, where she studied philosophy, literature, and history. She graduated from Harvard in 1954 with a degree in English.

## Literary Career

Sontag began her literary career as a writer of essays. Her early essays were published in journals such as *Partisan Review*, *Commentary*, and *The New York Review of Books*. In 1966, she published her first collection of essays, *Against Interpretation*, which became a critical and commercial success.

Sontag's essays cover a wide range of topics, including literature, culture, photography, and politics. She is known for her sharp wit, her willingness to challenge conventional wisdom, and her ability to see things from multiple perspectives.

In addition to her essays, Sontag also wrote novels, plays, and screenplays. Her most famous novel is *The Volcano Lover* (1992), a historical novel about the life of Lord Nelson.

### **Influence on Photography**

Sontag was also a passionate advocate for photography. In 1977, she published *On Photography*, a book that explores the history, aesthetics, and social impact of photography. *On Photography* is considered a classic text on the subject, and it has influenced generations of photographers and writers.

Sontag argued that photography is not a neutral medium, but rather a way of seeing the world that is shaped by our own beliefs and values. She also explored the ethical implications of photography, particularly the way it can be used to exploit or victimize people.

### **Personal Life and Death**

Sontag was married twice. Her first marriage was to Philip Rieff, a sociologist, in 1950. They divorced in 1958. Sontag's second marriage was to Joseph Brodsky, a Russian poet, in 1972. They divorced in 1975.

Sontag was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1975. She underwent a mastectomy and chemotherapy, but the cancer eventually spread to her liver. Sontag died on December 28, 2004, at the age of 71.

## **Legacy**

Susan Sontag is considered one of the most important writers and intellectuals of the 20th century. Her work has had a profound impact on literature, culture, and photography. She is remembered for her intelligence, her originality, and her willingness to engage with complex and controversial topics.

Sontag's work continues to be read and studied by people all over the world. Her essays, novels, and plays offer a unique and valuable perspective on the human condition.

## **Suggested Readings**

- The Loneliness of Susan Sontag by Benjamin Moser
- Susan Sontag: The One Story by Joan Didion
- Susan Sontag, Influential Essayist and Novelist, Dies at 71 by Margalit Fox

## **Additional Resources**

- The Susan Sontag Foundation

- The Art of Fiction No. 149
- Susan Sontag on Death



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