



# Waiting for the Barbarians: Essays from the Classics to Pop Culture

*Daniel Mendelsohn*

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**Waiting for the Barbarians: Essays from the Classics to Pop Culture** Daniel Mendelsohn  
FINALIST FOR THE NATIONAL BOOK CRITICS CIRCLE AWARD  
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Over the past decade and a half, Daniel Mendelsohn's reviews for *The New York Review of Books*, *The New Yorker*, and *The New York Times Book Review* have earned him a reputation as "one of the greatest critics of our time" (*Poets & Writers*). In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, he brings together twenty-four of his recent essays—each one glinting with "verve and sparkle," "acumen and passion"—on a wide range of subjects, from *Avatar* to the poems of Arthur Rimbaud, from our inexhaustible fascination with the *Titanic* to Susan Sontag's *Journals*. Trained as a classicist, author of two internationally best-selling memoirs, Mendelsohn moves easily from penetrating considerations of the ways in which the classics continue to make themselves felt in contemporary life and letters (Greek myth in the *Spider-Man* musical, Anne Carson's translations of Sappho) to trenchant takes on pop spectacles—none more explosively controversial than his dissection of *Mad Men*.

Also gathered here are essays devoted to the art of fiction, from Jonathan Littell's Holocaust blockbuster *The Kindly Ones* to forgotten gems like the novels of Theodor Fontane. In a final section, "Private Lives," prefaced by Mendelsohn's *New Yorker* essay on fake memoirs, he considers the lives and work of writers as disparate as Leo Lerman, Noël Coward, and Jonathan Franzen. *Waiting for the Barbarians* once again demonstrates that Mendelsohn's "sweep as a cultural critic is as impressive as his depth."

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