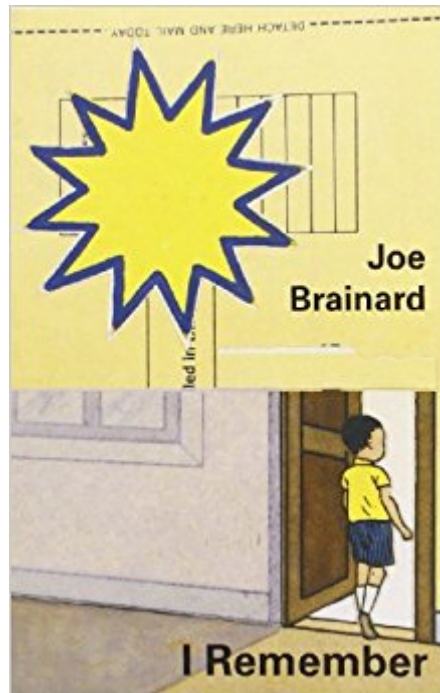




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# Joe Brainard: I Remember



## Synopsis

Joe Brainard's *I Remember* is a literary and artistic cult classic, praised and admired by writers from Paul Auster to John Ashbery and Edmund White. As autobiography, Brainard's method was brilliantly simple: to set down specific memories as they rose to the surface of his consciousness, each prefaced by the refrain "I remember": "I remember when I thought that if you did anything bad, policemen would put you in jail." Brainard's enduring gem of a book has been issued in various forms over the past thirty years. In 1970, Angel Hair books published the first edition of *I Remember*, which quickly sold out; he wrote two subsequent volumes for Angel Hair, *More I Remember* (1972) and *More I Remember More* (1973), both of which proved as popular as the original. In 1973, the Museum of Modern Art in New York published Brainard's *I Remember Christmas*, a new text for which he also contributed a cover design and four drawings. Excerpts from the Angel Hair editions appeared in *Interview*, *Gay Sunshine*, *The World* and the *New York Herald*. Then in 1975, Full Court Press issued a revised version collecting all three of the Angel Hair volumes and added new material, using the original title *I Remember*. This complete edition is prefaced by poet and translator Ron Padgett.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Out of print for a decade, these memoirs of the artist and writer who died of AIDS last year include a new afterword by Ron Padgett. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A completely original book. -- Edmund White Each detail seduces and reveals while remaining entirely true to the unsentimental demands of the form itself. -- San Francisco Bay Guardian, January 31, 2001 "Noel Black; a masterpiece; Joe Brainard's modest little gem will endure. both uproariously funny and deeply moving. -- Paul Auster, 1995; he had happened onto something wonderful; Joe's originality came from the fresh way he looked at things. -- Ron Padgett; universal appeal. He catalogues; fashion and fads, public events and private fantasies, with such honesty and accuracy and in such abundance; -- The Voice Literary Supplement, --Michael Lally

I Remember is a small book, 167 pages of statements all beginning with "I remember." Joe Brainard was born in 1941. He was a painter and artist, and this little book is an art piece itself. His memories are an assortment of pop culture ("I remember 'Love Me Tender,'" "I remember the Liz-Eddie-Debbie scandal") to food ("I remember 'Payday' candy bars and eating the peanuts off first then eating the center part," "I remember 'Spam.'") and sexuality ("I remember getting erections in school and the bell rings and how handy zipper notebooks were," "I remember jerking off to sexual fantasies involving John Kerr. And Montgomery Clift.") Most of the memories are only 10-20 words, but the longest reach a page (there are only two or three that long, I think.) Reading this is fun. They almost serve as writing prompts, or at least memory prompts, which get you thinking about what you remember too. It's also fun to track Brainard's stream-of-consciousness way of writing. Sometimes you can see how one memory relates to the next, and sometimes it requires quite a leap in logic to get there. Brainard's images are crisp and clear and he often paints these pictures with very few words. And he hits so many notes. You laugh, you cry! By using "I remember..." before each one, Brainard inspires the reader to response. "Hey, I remember that too!" or "That reminds me of..." It makes reading this book an interactive experience.

A very interesting read, enjoyed it a lot, very different and welcome.

This is an entertaining book that I find pops into my head now and again. The reason, I think, is mostly the premise. The idea of repeating lines of 'I Remember.' I find this formula hypnotic. It was fun to read and leads you down some corridors of your past that you had forgotten were there.

So amazing. I used this with my writing class to generate "I remember" reponses.

A highly rewarding read for those interested in one of the New York School's most endearing, original, and philosophically lively. We want to remember Joe Brainard and how he sees the world.

good book

If anyone is familiar with Billy Joel's "We Didn't Start the Fire", this is very similar. Joe Brainard puts together a wide compilation of personal, social, cultural, and economic memories across the span of over 100 pages. Despite the fact that I was born in 1986 and cannot relate to everything in the book, this does not stop it from being amazing. It gives a representation of not only higher order memory, but also, perhaps more importantly, humanity. This book, though not widely known, has been used repeatedly in schools and even in psychological lessons for students and clients alike to reach back into their memories and remember not only the simple things, but the complex as well. It ranges from what fresh cut grass smells like on a Sunday morning to personal experiences that Joe, as a young gay man, experienced finding himself in a world unkind to such life choices. The book is powerful, moving, easy to read, has a sense of familiarity, and can speak across the generations.

I remember 'I Remember' coming out in fascicles - all right then, installments; I Remember, I Remember More, More I Remember More. I remember paper chains. I remember Hunt the Thimble. I remember watching TV (The Grove Family Christmas special?) through a shopfront window. I remember carol singers being sent packing and told to come back nearer Christmas Eve. Of course they never did. I remember, as an only child, being allowed to pull all the crackers. I remember McDonald Hobley's face twitching lasciviously as he sang a duet with Sylvia Peters. Or can he have been acting? I remember the Christmas editions of the comics (there must have been a dozen to choose from if you hunted around) and what an exquisite sense of anticipation they radiated, for pennies. Not that pennies abounded. Joe died, I remember. It's a game anyone can play, but it's Joe's game (though I'll allow his acolyte Georges Perec a little of the limelight) and it's Joe being Joe that makes it, but it does not represent all of him by any means any more than the limp Not Waving but Drowning sums up the sheer feistiness of Stevie Smith - and I'm not sure what Paul Auster brings to the mix; his qualified pronouncement that I Remember is one of the twenty best something-or-others is frankly risible unless he names the other nineteen - of which I'm sure one at least would be by him! Joe's \*unique\*, Paul, a one-off - think William Blake rather than a jobbing writer. This would make a nonpareil stocking filler, but your more discerning friends deserve Bean Spasms, newly reissued in facsimile, without the egregious, and superfluous, Auster. Twenty best??

Such magisterial vagueness, such dizzying condescension

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