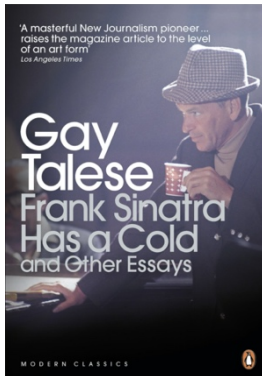


## Book Talk Remote Reading Group

### ***FRANK SINATRA HAS A COLD and Other Essays*** **By Gay Talese**



A selection of witty and provocative essays from the father of New Journalism.

Frank Sinatra in a pool hall, troubled by a cold, unable to sing and not in the best of moods; the boxer Floyd Patterson, gentle and dignified, haunted by the sense that he was always a loser; Fidel Castro being introduced to an ageing and infirm Muhammad Ali, and a Mafia boss arriving at his tailor's to collect a suit – how do they tell him there's been a terrible accident...? In these compulsively readable profiles one of America's finest journalists lays bare the man behind the myth.

### **Things to think about**

1. Gay Talese was heralded as one of America's first 'New Journalists'. What seems new, or at least original, about the way he chooses to tell the story of each of his subjects?
2. What characteristics do a lot of the people Talese chooses to profile in this book have in common? Was he looking for the same thing in them each time?
3. A number of Talese's subjects in this book have reputations as hard men – boxers, a mobster, a singer with links to the Mob. But is that how they emerge from Talese's portraits?
4. Do you think these profiles have a moral to the story?

5. The prison library book club who previously read this book found it supremely readable – even at times impossible to put down. What do you think it is about the way it is written – the scene-setting, the description, for example - that makes it so?
  
6. How much does Gay Talese put himself into these features?
  
7. What kind of person does Talese come across as, on the basis of how he's written these features and what they're about? If you met him, what would you imagine him to be like?
  
8. Can one find this kind of reportage, and these kinds of piece, in newspapers or magazines these days, and if so where, and by whom?
  
9. If Gay Talese were still writing these kinds of magazine profiles today, what individuals would you like him to write about, and why?

### **About the author**

Gay Talese has been described by the author of *The Godfather*, Mario Puzo, as 'the best non-fiction writer in America'. He wrote his pieces of reportage for the *New York Times*, the *New Yorker* and *Esquire*. He lives in New York.

**Thank you! Please return this to the reading group co-ordinator.**