Cutting Edge Pre-Intermediate B2-level Reading Practice

Read the two articles and answer the questions.

Reading 1:

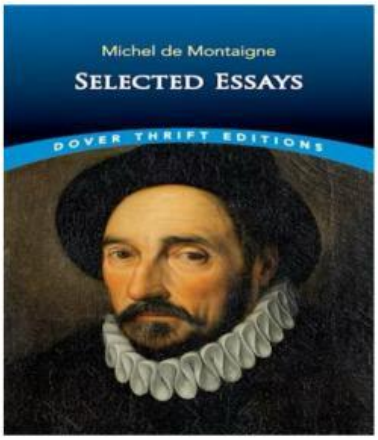
Rain Man and the Meaning of Friendship and Brotherly Love

Barry Levinson's film *Rain Man* (1988) tells the story of Charlie Babbitt, a young man driven by ambition, money, and self-interest. At first, Charlie sees his newly discovered brother Raymond only as a way to gain access to their father's fortune. Yet the journey they take together becomes a delayed coming-of-age story for Charlie. His transformation is gradual: he learns patience, empathy, and responsibility.

By the end, Charlie refuses the inheritance, showing that he values something greater than wealth. This renunciation of materialism points toward a deeper spiritual truth—that human connection, not money, gives life meaning.

The film also highlights the virtues of brotherly love and true friendship. Charlie begins by exploiting Raymond, but he ends by protecting and honoring him. Their bond grows into a kind of friendship that is steady, pure, and transformative. In this way, *Rain Man* reminds us that love between brothers can reveal moral truths and reshape values.

This theme connects directly to the writings of Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592), the French thinker often called the "inventor" of the essay. Montaigne's *Essais* explored human experience with honesty and reflection, and his chapter *Of Friendship* describes the rare, perfect union between two souls. Montaigne's work influenced later writers and philosophers such as Pascal, Descartes, Emerson, and Nietzsche. His reflections on friendship provide a timeless lens through which we can understand Charlie's journey: the discovery that true friendship and fraternal love are more valuable than wealth or ambition.



LIVEWORKSHEETS

5 MCQs on *Rain Man* Introductory Essay

1. **Main Idea** What is the central theme of *Rain Man* as described in the essay?

   A) The importance of wealth and ambition
   B) Charlie's delayed coming-of-age and moral transformation
   C) The dangers of travel and risk
   D) The superiority of romantic love

2. **Detail Recognition** Why does Charlie refuse the inheritance at the end of the film?
   A) He wants Raymond to have all the money
   B) He values human connection more than wealth
   C) He believes money is cursed
   D) He is forced by the court

3. **Inference** What does the essay suggest is the opposite of materialism in *Rain Man*?
   A) Romantic passion
   B) Spiritual truth and human connection
   C) Business success
   D) Family obligation

4. **Connecting Themes** How does the essay link *Rain Man* to Montaigne's *Of Friendship*?
   A) Both show that friendship is based on usefulness
   B) Both argue that wealth is the highest value
   C) Both highlight the rare, transformative nature of true friendship
   D) Both focus on romantic love

5. **Background Knowledge** According to the essay, why is Montaigne important in world literature?
   A) He was a famous playwright in Paris
   B) He invented the modern essay form
   C) He wrote novels about friendship
   D) He was a student of Aristotle

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Reading 2:

To deepen our understanding of these themes of fraternal love and true friendship in *Rain Man*, below is an adapted version of Montaigne's original essay *Of Friendship.*

Of Friendship, by Michel de Montaigne (1576)

I speak of friendship because I have known it in its purest form. Many people call themselves friends, but true friendship is rare. Some friendships are made for usefulness, others for pleasure. These are weak. They end when the benefit or the joy disappears, but the highest kind of friendship is different. It is built on honesty, trust, and love. In such friendship, two souls join together without thought of gain.

Philosophers have written about friendship. Aristotle said there are three kinds: useful, pleasant, and virtuous. The first two are common, but they do not last. The third, based on virtue, is strong and eternal. I agree with him, but I speak from my own experience. I had one true friend, Étienne de La Boétie. Our friendship was so deep that words cannot fully explain it. We were united in heart and mind. There was no selfishness, no calculation, no desire for advantage. We were simply one.

This kind of friendship cannot be chosen or forced. It comes by chance, almost by fate. It is not made by long meetings or shared activities. It is a union of souls. Ordinary friendships may be pleasant or useful, but they are fragile. They break with distance, time, or change of interest. True friendship does not break. Fortune cannot touch it. Misfortune cannot weaken it. It is eternal.

Friendship is also different from love between man and woman. Love is full of desire, jealousy, and passion. It is often unstable and short. Friendship is calm, steady, and pure. It is not about the body but about the soul. It is stronger and more reliable than romantic love. In friendship, there is no fear, no suspicion, no change of heart. It is a perfect bond.

A true friend becomes part of you. You share thoughts, feelings, and even identity. With La Boétie, I felt that we were not two men but one soul in two bodies. This unity gave me joy, strength, and wisdom. It also gave me deep sorrow when he died. My life lost its greatest happiness. My heart was wounded forever. Yet I honor him still, by writing of our friendship, so that others may know what it means.

I say again: true friendship is rare. It is not about usefulness or pleasure. It is about complete trust and union. It is given by fate, not made by effort. When it happens, it brings the highest joy and meaning to life. For me, friendship was the most perfect human bond, greater even than love or family ties. Nothing in the world equals the happiness of having one true friend.

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10 MCQs on Montaigne's Of Friendship (B1 level)

1. Main idea What is Montaigne's main point in *Of Friendship*?

A) Friendship is useful for business.
B) True friendship is rare and perfect.
C) Romantic love is stronger than friendship.
D) Family ties are the most important bond.

2. Identifying opinion Which of these is Montaigne's opinion?

A) Aristotle said there are three kinds of friendship.
B) Montaigne had a friend named La Boétie.
C) True friendship cannot be forced; it comes by fate.
D) Ordinary friendships often break with time.

3. Ordering of ideas Which idea comes first in Montaigne's essay?

A) His sorrow after La Boétie's death.
B) The difference between friendship and romantic love.
C) Aristotle's three kinds of friendship.
D) The definition of true friendship.

4. Keyword synonym (with context) Sentence: "True friendship is rare." What is the closest synonym for "rare" in the text?

A) Common
B) Unusual
C) Easy
D) Frequent

5. Keyword synonym (with context) Sentence: "It is not made by long meetings or shared activities. It is a **union** of souls." What is the closest synonym for "union" in the text?

A) Separation
B) Connection
C) Argument
D) Distance

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6. Keyword synonyms (with context) Sentence: "This **renunciation of materialism** pointstoward a deeper spiritual truth—that human connection, not money, gives life meaning." What is the closest synonym for the phrase "renunciation of materialism" in this sentence?

A) Giving up stuff
B) Accumulating more possessions
C) Forgetting your core beliefs
D) Becoming more self-confident

7. Detail recognition According to Montaigne, what makes romantic love different from friendship?

A) It is calm and steady.
B) It is full of desire and jealousy.
C) It is based on honesty and trust.
D) It is eternal and unchanging.

8. Inference Why does Montaigne say ordinary friendships are fragile?

A) They depend on usefulness or pleasure.
B) They are stronger than family ties.
C) They are chosen by fate.
D) They are based on virtue.

9. Identifying opinion Which statement shows Montaigne's personal belief?

A) Fortune cannot touch true friendship.
B) La Boétie was Montaigne's friend.
C) Aristotle wrote about three kinds of friendship.
D) Romantic love can be unstable.

10. Ordering of ideas What does Montaigne discuss after describing his friendship with La Boétie?

A) The difference between friendship and romantic love.
B) The definition of ordinary friendships.
C) His sorrow after La Boétie's death.
D) Aristotle's three kinds of friendship.

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11. Main idea / conclusion What is Montaigne's final message about friendship?

A) It is useful for pleasure and gain.

B) It is stronger than romantic love and family ties.

C) It is common and easy to find.

D) It is based on daily meetings and activities.

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