READINGS ON

STEPHEN KING

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Chapter 1: Stephen King, Portrait of the Artist

1. Stephen King: Celebrity Writer or Modern Master?
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   Although many serious literary critics have scoffed at King because of his vast commercial popularity, the high quality of his writing and distinctiveness of his voice will ultimately determine his place in modern American literature.

2. The Influence of a Cold War Childhood on Stephen King’s Imagination
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   Science fiction movies of the 1950s, along with Cold War paranoia, influenced Stephen King’s development as a horror writer.

3. Stephen King, College Student
   by Sanford Phippen 45
   Classmates and professors recall King as a scruffy campus radical who occasionally sang sad country songs at the local coffeehouse, but they also remember a dedicated young writer of fiction, poetry, and a newspaper column.

4. King’s Views on the Writing Process
   by Stephen King 59
   Reading extensively is indispensable to writing well. Reading teaches the learning writer about style, plot development, narration, and creating characters.
5. Is Stephen King Calling It Quits?
   by Chris Nashawaty
   In a 2002 interview, King reflects on his long career and personal struggles, including substance abuse and a near-fatal 1999 accident. He also announces his imminent retirement from publishing fiction.

Chapter 2: Overarching Themes and Conventions in King's Fiction

1. King and the Heritage of Horror
   by Garyn G. Roberts
   King reimagines a rich literary heritage of vampires, werewolves, and other monstrous creatures throughout his fiction and in movie versions of his works.

2. The Art of Balance in King's Novels
   by Edwin F. Casebeer
   Stephen King's novels represent a wide thematic range beyond the genre of horror. A study of King's development as a writer reveals how he balances ambivalent themes in his books.

3. Stephen King's Gothic Melodrama
   by James Egan
   Melodramatic and gothic conventions influence King's characterizations, themes, language, plot structure, and narrative perspectives. Yet while King pays homage to these conventions, he also transforms them in modern and innovative ways.

Chapter 3: Reading the Books

1. The Stand's All-American Apocalypse
   by Joseph Reino
   King's great epic The Stand stages a biblical and mythic battle between good and evil against a recognizably modern American pop-culture backdrop.

2. Donna Trenton: A Modern American Heroine
   by Carol A. Senf
   The life of Cujo's heroine Donna Trenton represents the situation of late-twentieth-century women. Although as trapped in her marriage as she will be by the
rabid dog Cujo, Donna demonstrates courage in facing problems both ordinary and extraordinary.

3. Adolescent Angst in *Rage*  
*by Michael R. Collings*  
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In *Rage*, one of the early books King published under the pseudonym Richard Bachman, a clash between adolescent and adult illusions is revealed in the troubled young protagonist's thoughts.

4. The Vampire Tradition in *Misery*  
*by Natalie Schroeder*  
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A feminist-psychoanalytic reading examines *Misery* as a naturalistic vampire novel, with homicidal fan Annie Wilkes a symbolic mother, wife, and lover to the writer she holds captive.

5. *Pet Sematary* and the Paradox of Death  
*by Douglas E. Winter*  
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*Pet Sematary*, considered by many to be King's darkest novel, was born of King's anxieties about his own family. The novel derives its tragic power from its relentless exploration of death and the human incapacity to accept mortality.

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