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| |  |  | | --- | --- | | **LIFE**  Born Susan Rosenblatt in New York City on January 16, 1933, Sontag grew up in Tucson, Arizona, and attended high school in Los Angeles. She began her undergraduate studies at the University of California, Berkeley but transferred to the University of Chicago for its famed core curriculum. At Chicago, she undertook studies in philosophy, ancient history and literature alongside her other requirements.   At 17, Sontag married writer Philip Rieff, who was a sociology instructor at the University of Chicago, after a 10-day courtship; their marriage lasted eight years. While studying at Chicago, Sontag also became best friends with fellow student and filmmaker Mike Nichols and attended a summer school taught by the Sociologist Hans Heinrich Gerth who became a friend and subsequently influenced her study of German thinkers. She did graduate work in philosophy, literature, and theology at Harvard University and Saint Anne’s College, Oxford.  Establishing herself as a writer in her hometown, in 1964 she gained recognition for her essay “Notes on Camp.” She published four novels and nine works of non-fiction, and directed four feature-length films. She died in 2004 in New York City.  **KEY IDEAS IN ONG’S *ORALITY AND LITERACY***  How the psychologies of sight and sound differ  Consciousness  Writing as a technology  Language and its influence on self and society  Media in history  How knowing the ancient world helps us understand the present and future | WRIT 4260/5260 | Stroupe  **QUESTIONS**  ⎯ Though written in 1973, long before the internet, in what ways do Sontag’s observations about photographs speak to our own relationship to images (and to each other *through* images) today?  ⎯ If the power and meaning of images don’t simply emanate from the images themselves, what are some ways that Sontag accounts for how images work culturally?  **COMMENTARIES ON SONTAG**  “[C]ultural prophecies are sometimes most interesting when they turn out to be wrong, and while “On Photography” can look, from one angle, like the expression of an obsolescent worldview, it also turns out to be jarringly prescient, one of a small handful of works of 20th-century criticism that speak, with uncanny directness, to the state of 21st-century culture.” – A.O. Scott, New York Times, 2011  “ Many of her essays consist of webs of passive verbs. (Creative-writing teachers commonly instruct their students to stay away from passive verbs, but Sontag demonstrates how wrong that is, how far you can fly on their wings.) Like a prophetess with closed eyes, seeing deep into the nature of things, she declaims one “is/are/seems” verb-sentence after another: the impersonal, the oracular, the anonymous, the present tense and indeed the overbearing are evident, but so is something else from the start— the wish to be wise.” – Phillip Lopate, The Aphoristic Essay, 2009 | |

*** It all started with one essay—about the problems, aesthetic and moral, posed by the omnipresence of photographed images; but the more I thought about what photographs are, the more complex and suggestive they became. So one generated another…a progress of essays about the meaning and career of photographs. “***

***— Susan Sontag, “Preface,”   
 On Photography***

*“The photographer’s intentions do not determine the meaning of the photograph, which will have its own career, blown by the whims and loyalties of the diverse communities that have use for it.”*

*- Susan Sontag,* Regarding the

Pain of Others

Susan Sontag

