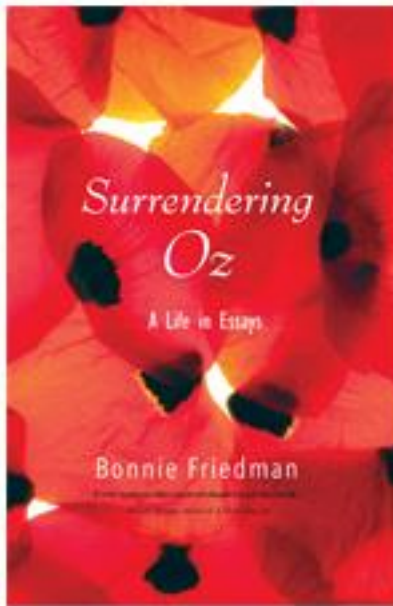


Bookverdict.com – January 1st, 2015



[Book Review](#)

Surrendering Oz: A Life in Essays

[Book Verdict review from the Library Journal](#)

Literary revelations concerning gender are a useful takeaway from Friedman's (creative writing, Univ. of North Texas; *Writing Past Dark*; *The Thief of Happiness*) autobiographical essays. Women's adventure stories, she explains, often involve a period of coma, à la *Sleeping Beauty*, and girls' coming-of-age tales involve relinquishing the world beyond home. Friedman's life, however, as described in these insightful examinations of growing up in the Bronx, (kind of) leaving New York for work, and going through the death of her sister and the decline of her parents, has involved anything but absence and relinquishment. The author is at times painfully present in her own life—though she notes that often she doesn't realize the meaning of her piercing observations for decades—and her fumbling efforts to become a "grown-up grown-

up" will be so familiar to readers that her musings appear almost as an instruction manual for midlife. VERDICT Readers who feel they are mentally, as Friedman says, "sitting up there cross-legged and gazing out the eyeholes," will recognize themselves in and enjoy this more serious version of Roz Chast's *Can't We Talk About Something More Pleasant*. Also a must for students of creative writing. — Henrietta Verma, *Library Journal*