



Literary Theory For Beginners

Mary Klages , Frank Reynoso (Illustrations) , Bill Brown (Foreword)

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Have you heard the terms *structuralism* and *deconstruction* and *postmodernism* but aren't really sure what they mean? Have you taken a whole course on literary criticism but are still feeling lost? Here s the book you need to sort it all out and enjoy doing so!

In *Literary Theory For Beginners*, Mary Klages takes you into her classroom, cuts through the jargon, and explains the ABCs (and the DEFs as well) in terms you can get your head around. Her breadth of knowledge, her unique skills as a teacher, and the delightful illustrations of Frank Reynoso help us understand why literature matters, how it affects us, and how it reflects history, culture, and diversity. Here are ways of thinking about literature not just reading it methods of study and frameworks of interpretation from classical humanism all the way up to psychoanalysis, gender and queer theory, race, postcolonialism, and, yes, postmodernism.

With wit and wisdom, Klages takes on the two most frequently asked questions about literature and makes it all fun:

What does the work MEAN? (What is the deeper, hidden, or symbolic meaning? Did the author intend all these meanings? Are any and all meanings present in the text? Are all meanings equally valid?)

What does the work DO? (Why is literature important? What effect does it have on the reader? How can literature be a force for social change?)

So sit back, relax, and take it all in!

Literary Theory For Beginners Details

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Olivia "Don't Blame Me I Voted for Hillary" says

This book is very interesting, informative, and entertaining. Unlike the rest of the books I've read in the "For Beginners" series, it isn't a comic book. But I imagine that it would have been impossible to get all of the facts told about in this book into a comic book. I learned a lot from this book.

Ayman says

I had an engineering education and an 18 years career in technology and business. I had my share of fiction novels, but I didn't have the faintest clue what does it mean to study literature as a serious discipline.

I picked this book because I am harboring some fantasies of writing a fiction novel or novella and I was hoping to learn some techniques or secret recipes. The book in that sense was extremely disappointing, however, it opened my eyes to a field of studies I was completely oblivious to.

Literary theory is concerned with the meaning and use of language and this book does a great job explaining the different philosophical schools in that regard starting from structuralists who thought language is a model we use to describe an already structured world around us, to the postmodernists who basically say that language IS the actual structure of the world and changes in language do in fact change the world itself.

Not an easy read, for a technology/business person like me, but it was enjoyable. hence 3 stars

Mike Heyd says

This book, which I received for free in a Goodreads giveaway, is based on the "Introduction to Literary Theory" course that the author teaches at the University of Colorado, Boulder. In fact, reading this book may be the next best thing to sitting in Professor Klages' class.

This review of literary theory begins, as so much of Western literature and philosophy does, with the ancient Greeks. The development of literary theory traced by Klages closely parallels, as indeed it should, the development of philosophical understanding over the centuries since. What could be a dry discourse is far from it. This is a fun, engaging survey and an enjoyable read. The discussion lacks supporting references but I'm sure Professor Klages could supply them if asked. She interjects a bit of humor at times- always desirable in a college-level lecture- and Frank Reynoso's illustrations are apropos, entertaining, and appropriately illuminating.

I like this book. Its only disappointment for me is that the book doesn't give many examples in literary works of the various theories discussed. I suppose that's on the final exam: "Please explain how George Orwell's 1984 embodies Althusser's Structuralism."

Janice says

No, couldn't do it. I tried. Read about half of it and really wanted to find some redeeming qualities. First, it wasn't for beginners. Second, parts weren't even theory. She had a whole chapter on Freud and why he is obsolete so don't even give him space or just give him a mention, not a chapter. Then there were the illustrations which should have been more serious and technical considering the subject matter and should have gone with what was on the page.

I get the feeling that the author is probably a better lecturer than writer. It really takes a different person to write versus to teach.

All in all, I would listen to a lecture by her, but I don't think I'd read another book by her.

This was from a free giveaway on Goodreads.

Rachel Parrott says

"Literary Theory for Beginners" provides an easy to read overview of a vast subject.

My copy was a gift through Goodreads First Reads.

Victoria Elizabeth says

This is an excellent introductory read for anyone who has even the mildest interest in literary theory. Klages defines and dissects the premises of some of the most influential literary criticism lenses (and does so in an entertaining, personable manner). As an English Lit Major, it was a refreshing review of some of the topics I encountered in my curriculum, but also provided insight into theories that had escaped my awareness until now. I will also be reading some of her recommendations of literary theory works provided at the end of the book (I love when authors do this!). My only caution is to readers who dislike when an author blatantly writes her personal opinion on academic topics, as this book is full of authorial opinion on literary movements and theorists.

Jericho Eames says

I liked this introduction, I learnt a lot and ready to dive deeper into literary theory!
