



# Postmodern Pooh

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## **Postmodern Pooh** Frederick C. Crews

Purporting to be the proceedings of a forum on Pooh convened at the Modern Language Association's annual convention, this sequel of sorts to the classic send-up of literary criticism, *The Pooh Perplex*, brilliantly parodies the academic fads and figures that held sway at the millennium. Deconstruction, poststructuralist Marxism, new historicism, radical feminism, cultural studies, recovered-memory theory, and postcolonialism, among other methods, take their shots at the poor stuffed bear and Frederick Crews takes his well-considered, wildly funny shots at them. His aim, as ever, is true.

## **Postmodern Pooh Details**

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Author : Frederick C. Crews

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## Vanessa says

A second collection of perceptible incompatible , disparate essays addressing aspects of literary criticism from the 1980' to the present ; from a deconstructivist or culturally multidimensional viewpoint rather than a strictly new criticism or structuralist one .

Very bombastic rhetoric ! And not humorous at all . Only die hard word sleuths and semanticists should attempt reading it .

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## Anastasia says

This book is the perfect summary of why I didn't go into graduate school for literature. If you think that the parody essays exemplifying different theoretical approaches in this book are over the top and unrealistic, just go look at the listing of presentation and paper titles for the Modern Language Association--those are even scarier. I keep this one around as a good reminder that us academic types should refrain from taking ourselves too seriously. It's a dangerous temptation to start thinking in terms of buzzwords from poststructuralism to neomarxism: down that path madness lies.

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## Nancy says

Brilliantly done, but not as novel as its original, Pooh Perplex.

It would make a good secondary course book (along with its companion book) but is definitely not stand-alone in a course of Lit Crit, which is how I was introduced to it.

My ambivalence lies here: Yes, it's a brilliant mockery of literary theorists, but pedantic, egoist, idiotic text is still pedantic, egoist, and idiotic even if it's intended to be that way.

I detested it, and yet I value what it accomplished.

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## Steven Rodriguez says

This book serves a double function: it's a biting satire of the major strands of contemporary postmodern literary criticism (Derridian, historicist, Marxist, feminist, queer, postcolonial, etc.), but it also serves as a

good crash-course introduction to the basic impulses of those different factions. The book loses a little of its comedic steam in the final third, and I have to admit that it was a little too crude for my taste, but it is worth reading. As a Christian, I found myself noticing that the concept of love was completely absent from the entire book, which leads me to think that Alan Jacob's "A Theology of Reading: The Hermeneutics of Love" may be the best way forward after reading this book.

But mostly, it's hilarious.

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## **Ed Erwin says**

Brilliant, often funny, and occasionally hilarious, fictional non-fiction satirizing many of the academic trends in analysis of literature. When people review books, the reviews often say as much, or more, about themselves. That's fine if you are don't act like your interpretation of a text is the only possible one. But that, of course, is what some academics do. Making provocative statements is one way to get noticed and promote yourself.

It is unsurprising that Crews knows all about the different styles and trends of textual analysis and personalities of academics. What is surprising is that this guy, who has published very little fiction, can write such good satires. The fictional authors of the pieces here, supposedly articles presented in an academic conference, come alive as real characters, all seeing totally different things in the text and talking past, rather than with, each other. Das Nuff Dat sees a story of colonialism, Dolores Malatesta, who in her "real" life sent her father to prison for sexual abuse that he is still "struggling to remember" having committed, sees evidence of ritual satanic abuse, and so on with the other "authors".

It probably helps if you know a little about "theory", and academia. Maybe it helps to have read any of the Pooh books. (Disclaimer, I have not.) But if you have ever met any pompous ass in any context, and of course you have, then you can enjoy seeing these ones get roasted.

While Crews is a big critic of Freud you won't see much mention of penis envy or Oedipus complex here. That was skewered already in "The Pooh Perplex". But 35 years or so later there was plenty of new material to mock in the field of Pooh Studies.

Trigger warning: Contains Poo(h) jokes. The most laugh-out-loud funny chapter for me was from the author obsessed with Pooh's innards. Could rabbit have gotten Pooh unstuck through judicious use of an enema? Or does Pooh even poo?

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## Rhonda Keith says

A brilliant sequel to Crews' *The Pooh Perplex*, this book is a compilation of Crews' essays spoofing the postmodern, deconstructionist literary criticism that has shanghai'd, hogtied, and stuffed shop rags into the mouth of the MLA. If I'd read the *Perplex* in grad school, I would have understood all my classes better. If I'd read *Postmodern* before starting an (unfinished) PhD program, I wouldn't have been so confused after being away from academia for eight years and might not have bothered. Not all professors had been infected with postmodernism, but when I asked one of them to explain something to me, he leered, "You'd like that, wouldn't you?" Mwahahahaha. Crews explains it.

By the way, Crews was not able to use the sketches from *Winnie the Pooh* for this book as he had for *The Pooh Perplex*. Someone had discovered licensing of children's icons and wouldn't allow free fair-use again, though *The Pooh Perplex* had been a big success.

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## Tiffany says

2.5 stars

Maybe I just hold Winnie the Pooh too dearly, but I couldn't completely enjoy the things that were written in this book. I do see the satire of it, and the mocking of various literary theories and how the theorists take themselves too seriously (and sometimes try too hard to find "evidence" to back up their theories... one thing I hated about analytical English classes), but it just hurt my heart to read some of the things that were written about Winnie the Pooh and the Winnie the Pooh books.

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## Moses Operandi says

This was a worthwhile read, and definitely biting satire, but it fell short of its predecessor in humor; perhaps because it's too realistic. Academia, the target its' jokes are directed at, has grown far more outrageous since Crewe first penned "The Pooh Perplex" to instant success. Many of the essays in *Postmodern Pooh* are all too believable. The one that really shines out is the essay "The Fissured Subtext" by Crewe's vitriolic post-structuralist Marxist, Carla Gulag, the Joe Camel Professor of Child Development at Duke University. This not only has one of the funniest passages from the book, but it is easier to understand. Partly, I'm sure, because my limited study of philosophy has not covered Jacques Derrida with the same zeal as Karl Marx (or any zeal at all; I had not heard of this humorous abomination before picking up *Postmodern Pooh*.)

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## Robert Holm says

Merciless satire of deconstruction, New Historicism and Stephen Greenblatt, Marxist literary criticism, radical/militant feminism and gynocritics, Harold Bloom, postcolonialism, biopoetics and memetics, repressed memories and the satanic ritual abuse hysteria, cultural studies, Roger Kimball, and Stanley Fish. Brilliant, if not always very funny, when you know how depressing the reality behind these things really is.

Still, should be required reading for all students in (and of) the humanities.

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### **Ben Thurley says**

A fictional symposium on A.A. Milne's *Winnie the Pooh* allows Frederick Crews to offer a variety of hilariously-rendered (but scrupulously plausible and carefully footnoted) readings or appropriations of this classic children's work – including post-colonial, post-structuralist, new historicist, Marxist, feminist and even a Darwinian literary study entitled "Gene/Meme Covariation in Ashdown Forest: *Pooh* and the Consilience of Knowledge".

This is a brilliant parody of everything you've ever studied in post-graduate literary criticism, wonderfully skewering the tortured language of academia. Crews' fabulous take-off of Stanley Fish (well, I assume it is him), "You Don't Know what *Pooh* Studies Are About, Do You, and Even If You Did, Do You Think Anybody Would Be Impressed?" by N. Mack Hobbs had me laughing until I cried:

Although his fundamental and daring innovations of theory always meet with initial resistance from traditionalists, sooner or later the profession tags along like a puppy on a choke chain."

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### **Brenton says**

Once again, a hilarious take on literary criticism. Writing-wise, Postmodern Pooh was stronger and funnier than *The Pooh Perplex* 37 years earlier. The ridiculousness of the extremes of [American] public intellectuals and faddish theory are laid out well in Postmodern Pooh--and not without its poignant moments. As a play-text for teaching theory, *The Pooh Perplex* is stronger, working better as both model and critique.

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### **Peter says**

very clever and very annoying - synced up really well with my writing a ton of meaningless papers at the moment

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### **Teddy Kupfer says**

pretty funny, some of it went over my head

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### **David says**

Full disclosure: As far as Winnie the Pooh is concerned, I'm in Dorothy Parker's camp. I think it's

nauseatingly cutesy dreck that condescends to children. But that's neither here nor there, because the target in "Postmodern Pooh" is not Pooh. In this sequel to his earlier book, "The Pooh Perplex", Crews instead takes aim at various current fads in academic literary criticism, using Pooh as a vehicle. This is a bit like shooting fish in a barrel, but the results are hilarious.

The book purports to be the proceedings of a forum on Winnie-the-Pooh at the Modern Language Association's annual convention. Crews takes devastating aim at the whole bunch, including, but not limited to:

Deconstructionism  
Poststructuralist Marxism  
Radical Feminism (gynocritical theory)  
New Historicism  
Postcolonialism  
Sociobiological Analysis  
QueerCultStudLitCrit  
the Woolf wrote Milne school

"As for 'the reader', spare me! The term elides difference, attempts to inscribe on a bubbling bouillabaisse of potentialities one model of a stolid, passive, tabula rasa receptor. Grant yourself a 'reader' and you automatically become a *writer* -- worse, a *communicator* with a plain *message* that 'the reader' will supposedly open like some ersatz telegram announcing that he has been declared a finalist in the Publishers Clearing House Sweepstakes."

"As you've seen, the Colonized Unconscious has already had its way with both Pooh and Milne, turning their backbones to Yorkshire pudding."

The book will probably be funniest (or most tragic) to academics who actually have to navigate the sordid back alleys of lit crit to ensure their professional survival. But there is plenty to amuse the general reader as well.

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## Heather Carrillo says

I gave this three stars because I couldn't give it five. I wanted to give it five because it's HILARIOUS! It's basically a satirical recounting of a fictional postmodern literary critique conference on the subject of Winnie the Pooh. Each "scholar" takes Pooh for his/her own personal spin in order to denounce the decline of the gentleman, or expose Piglet's hidden abuse, or lament the cause of woman. The book takes all the theories of the postmodern literary field and airs them for the world to see them for they really are: Absurdities.

However, I can't give it five stars because I don't want any of my conservative friends to unwittingly pick it up and be shocked at me. If you haven't caught on by cultural osmosis, a lot (and I mean A LOT!) of postmodern literary theory is obsessed with sex. Frederick Crews in his satire makes frequent use of this, and there are things in the book that are a pretty sketchy. So, it's funny, but consider yourself warned.

