

HOW TO READ LITERATURE LIKE A PROFESSOR: FOR KIDS BY THOMAS C. FOSTER



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From School Library Journal

Gr 6-9-This companion to the author's adult titles is geared toward young people who want to get a bit more out of J.K Rowling or Dr. Seuss. Foster uses both of these authors, along with Shakespeare and Homer (not Simpson), to illustrate various approaches to literature. He argues that there is really only one story, that of a journey or quest, and that it takes shape in many forms, in novels, plays, and poems. The book also delves into symbolism, irony, and the political and geographical aspects of literature. Readers will enjoy seeing Green Eggs and Ham from Foster's perspective of how food is often more than just a meal. Of course, he also touches on how the Bible, folk and fairy tales, and ancient literature form the basis of many of our favorite stories. His passion for literature is evident, and the text is readable and encouraging. While it would be a rare reader who would be familiar with every title the author cites, the arguments that he poses are solid and the examples are always apt. Students won't find literary research here, but they will find some valuable guidance on how to read critically and hopefully be inspired to read more widely.-Carol Fazioli, Barth Elementary School, Pottstown, PA(c) Copyright 2011. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

From Booklist

Opening with a quickly and effectively illuminated scene from Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* and continuing through such high-school syllabus texts as *The Odyssey*, Shakespeare's works, a sonnet by Christina Rossetti, and more, this introduction to literary methods, tropes, and symbols is refreshingly accessible. Without condescension, Foster adapts some of the concepts that he presents in his adult titles, including *How to Read Literature like a Professor* (2003), with kid-friendly examples, such as Dr. Seuss stories that show how a universal literary theme can play out in a specific work without losing its universal meaning. With a closing short story that invites young readers to try out their newfound analytical skills, this slim guidebook can provide language art students with just the right open window to catch the academic breeze of enlightenment without leaving them cold. An essential purchase for all library collections where there are readers new to exploring literature as a fine art, beyond reading for uncritical pleasure. Grades 6-10. --Francisca Goldsmith

From the Back Cover

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HOW TO READ LITERATURE LIKE A PROFESSOR: FOR KIDS BY THOMAS C. FOSTER PDF

In *How to Read Literature Like a Professor: For Kids*, New York Times bestselling author and professor Thomas C. Foster gives tweens the tools they need to become thoughtful readers. With funny insights and a conversational style, he explains the way writers use symbol, metaphor, characterization, setting, plot and other key techniques to make a story come to life.

From that very first middle school book report to that first college course, kids need to be able to understand the layers of meaning in literature. Foster makes learning this important skill fun and exciting by using examples from *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* to *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, from short stories and poems to movie scripts. This go-to guide unlocks all the hidden secrets to reading, making it entertaining and satisfying.

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Features

- Great product!

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Most helpful customer reviews

87 of 92 people found the following review helpful.

Not sure who this is for...

By Jilly

I bought this for my nine-year-old in hopes of reading it with him. After pre-reading it I have decided to not use it with him. I found parts of the book inappropriate for young children, and I also found many of the examples not relevant to kids. For example chapter one discusses a character and his quest and uses the example of a teenager having to run an errand for his mom on a bike he is embarrassed of (it's 1968). At the store he sees the girl he likes in the car of his enemy where she is laughing and fooling around, so the boy decides to enlist for Vietnam. This example is used to illustrate quests found in literature, but I think it is hard for kids to relate to.

In another chapter there is a discussion on Vampires (when will the Twilight influence finally end?) and Dracula and the character is described as "downright sexy". Later it is stated that "a nasty old man, attractive but evil, violates young women, leaves his mark on them, steals their innocence..." Then the author states that vampire stories have more to them than scaring us, "we might conclude that it has something to do with sex."

In discussing Shakespeare he talks how Woody Allen turned "*A Midsummer Night's Dream*" into "*A Midsummer Night's Sex Comedy*". There are also references to *Gilligan's Island*, *Rocky and Bullwinkle*, *East of Eden*, *Beauty Queens*, and many more that kids will not get. And this brings me to the biggest problem with this book. It is not relevant or appropriate for kids, especially not ages 8 and up, but it is too light and quick a read to be relevant to teenagers. I am not sure who this book is written to. I could use the ideas from the book, which are good, and find my own examples, but then I am doing most of the work. My advice, pre-read this at a library before buying to see if it is a good match for you and your child. I think you

may decided to pass on it as I have.

49 of 56 people found the following review helpful.

A disappointment

By Classical Homeschooling Mom

I was so excited when I saw this book was going to be released. I'd recently read and enjoyed "How To Read Literature Like a Professor", and was looking forward to having a version for my boys to read.

Imagine my surprise when a girl fooling around in a car is mentioned on page 1 of chapter one (the exact same example in the adult version of the book). Then I hit the chapter on vampires. Dracula is described as sexy. "A nasty old man, attractive but evil, violates young women, leaves his mark on them, steals their innocence, and leaves them helpless followers in their sin." We might "conclude that" vampires have "something to do with sex."

In addition, many of the stories used as examples are not stories that most 8-12 year olds would've read. Older stories and poems are referenced (Hemingway, Poe, etc.), and while these books should be read, they usually haven't been by the targeted age group.

I was left feeling disappointed in the book. I felt like the author simply removed random parts from his adult version to make the book shorter for kids, without paying attention to what he left in. Examples should've been changed to be more relevant and appropriate for the 8-12 year old audience he's claiming on the cover. There are too many inappropriate examples for my 7, 9, & 10 year olds, and I feel like my 12 & 13 year olds might as well read the adult version.

15 of 15 people found the following review helpful.

No Different than the original

By Ali BG

I am a huge fan of the original book. I own 60 copies and I use it to teach English10 Honors. It's an excellent resource, but two things drive my students crazy:

1. Foster cultivates a voice that's cheeky to the point of arrogance.
2. Foster's examples are so esoteric that they've rarely read them and they get lost in the long explanations about them.

When I saw this book, I thought: Aha! Change the examples and the tone for kids. PERFECT.

But nope. While *some* of the examples have changed, they've changed to things like Dr. Seuss. Not exactly appropriate for my audience. And the tone--even much of the language and many of the examples--is exactly the same.

PLUS, he's gotten rid of the "sex" chapters--two chapters that would have done best with a genuine makeover, and two chapters that are essential to navigating some of the banned/challenged books on our booklist.

Bummer.

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