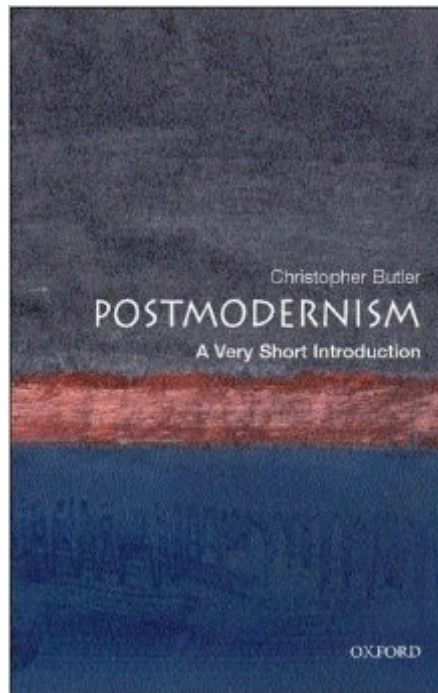


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Postmodernism: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions)



Synopsis

Postmodernism has been a buzzword in contemporary society for the last decade. But how can it be defined? In this Very Short Introduction Christopher Butler challenges and explores the key ideas of postmodernists, and their engagement with theory, literature, the visual arts, film, architecture, and music. He treats artists, intellectuals, critics, and social scientists 'as if they were all members of a loosely constituted and quarrelsome political party' - a party which includes such members as Cindy Sherman, Salman Rushdie, Jacques Derrida, Walter Abish, and Richard Rorty - creating a vastly entertaining framework in which to unravel the mysteries of the 'postmodern condition', from the politicizing of museum culture to the cult of the politically correct.

ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

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Customer Reviews

Postmodernism is a tricky thing to define. According to Christopher Butler, 'it is certain of its uncertainty', and he intentionally writes 'about postmodern artists, intellectual gurus, academic critics, philosophers, and social scientists...as if they were all members of a loosely constituted and quarrelsome political party.' Butler draws on the work of Derrida, Jameson, Barthes, Althusser and Foucault to provide an intellectual basis for the idea of postmodernism, but does not confine his study to critical and literary theory. The idea of postmodernism is one that has spread into politics and other social sciences, art and the humanities, and even the hard sciences in many ways. Because postmodernism is more of a method or discourse than a set theory (at least so far as typical Anglo-American concepts of theory would have it), Butler worries that some of postmodernism is lost in translation - owing so much to the French intellectual foundation, and owing much to nuance and subtle readings, the translation of postmodern ideas has been slow to be exactly transferred. This is also in part due to the resistance of English and English-speaking intellectual constructs to permit some of the linguistic aspects of postmodernism in any easy way. One of the key issues of postmodernism is the idea of grand narratives and metanarratives, and changing the way one uses text, language and symbolic items to interpret the world. This is where deconstruction and reconstruction come into play. Butler addresses these issues in terms of philosophy, history, art and expression, as well as ethical and political theory.

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