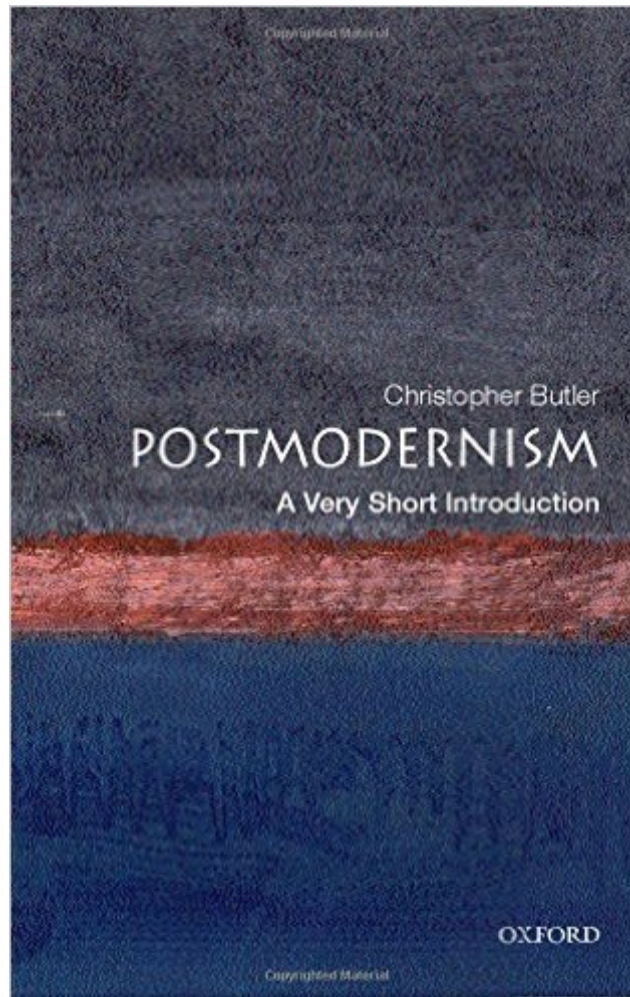


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Postmodernism: A Very Short Introduction



Synopsis

Postmodernism has become the buzzword of contemporary society over the last decade. But how can it be defined? In this highly readable introduction the mysteries of this most elusive of concepts are unraveled, casting a critical light upon the way we live now, from the politicizing of museum culture to the cult of the politically correct. The key postmodernist ideas are explored and challenged, as they figure in the theory, philosophy, politics, ethics and artwork of the period, and it is shown how they have interacted within a postmodernist culture. About the Series: Combining authority with wit, accessibility, and style, Very Short Introductions offer an introduction to some of life's most interesting topics. Written by experts for the newcomer, they demonstrate the finest contemporary thinking about the central problems and issues in hundreds of key topics, from philosophy to Freud, quantum theory to Islam.

Book Information

Paperback: 152 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press; 1 edition (January 16, 2003)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0192802399

ISBN-13: 978-0192802392

Product Dimensions: 6.9 x 0.5 x 4.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.9 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.7 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (46 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #72,255 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #4 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Movements & Periods > Postmodernism](#) #10 in [Books > Textbooks > Humanities > Philosophy > Aesthetics](#) #24 in [Books > Humor & Entertainment > Puzzles & Games > Math Games](#)

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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