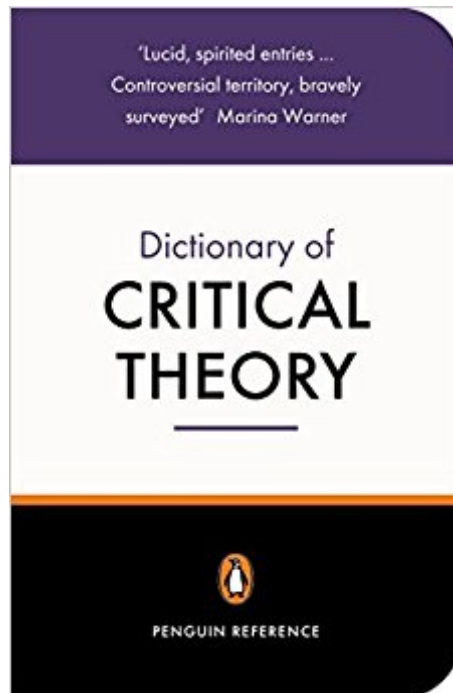




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The Penguin Dictionary Of Critical Theory (Penguin Reference Books)



Synopsis

Accessing the huge selection of critical theory can be an intimidating experience. This acclaimed dictionary is an invaluable introduction to the theories and theorists in the field and will prove an authoritative resource for all students.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Remarkable for its comprehensiveness, mapping "theory" across a wide range of disciplines and art forms. It is certainly a reference book I will want to have on my own shelves." â David Lodge

"Excellent...an unusual instance of an academic reference book that I do believe doubles quite effectively as a textbook for students and I would recommend it unreservedly to anyone with an interest in theoretical matters, or just in the history of ideas." â Dr. Duncan Wu, St. Catherine's College, Oxford

"An astonishing encyclopaedia of people, ideas and concepts...ideal as introductory essays on a thinker or concept that you want to get a handle on before reading further...the book also rewards browsers with entries on unpredictable things like "dead white European males" and "false memory syndrome"...a great purchase for students of cultural studies, literature or sociology." â www.Theory.org.uk

"Enlightening and fun: this dictionary is a treasure of easy, elegant erudition. From abjection to zeugma, Plato to Tarantino, it offers focused critical enquiry and entices readers on more whimsical tours around the ideas." â Dr. Andrea Ashworth

"Splendidly done. It brings clarity to the world of difficult concepts and radical ideas that constitute modern and post-modern critical theory, covering the significant schools and bringing clear definitions."

â "Malcolm Bradbury

David Macey is the author of 'Lacan in Contexts' (1988), 'The Lives of Michel Foucault' (1993) and 'Franz Fanon: A Biography' (2000). He lives in Leeds.

This is an essential resource for anyone having to discuss critical theory who has a finite amount of attention for the topic and/or lacks a basic undergraduate collegiate experience within philosophy. Concise, easy to understand definitions and a boatload of cross-referencing makes keeping unfamiliar terms clear and leads to free-association between other concepts. The Penguin Dictionary of Critical Theory did more to help me retain and build upon the discourse within my graduate-level critical theory lectures than most of the assigned lecture readings. I am a far more competent reader and writer within that mode of communication for it.

A must have for critical thinkers!!

A DICTIONARY OF CRITICAL THEORY by David Macey is one of those books that ought to be held in one hand while the other holds another text on literary theory. It is no easy task to succinctly summarize let alone analyze an imposingly long list of terms, writers, movements, and schools of critical thought, but Macey has come close. Assume that a reader is about to try to plow his way through the denseness that is the thought of Lacan. As a preliminary, that reader would be wise first to read the general background to Lacanian thought before navigating a way between Lacan's distinctions between the Real and the Imaginary stages of infantile growth. Or perhaps that reader feels a lack of understanding of Freud's oedipal issues. Macey is where to begin. Macey's text is arranged alphabetically, as any proper dictionary should be, but this text is more encyclopedia than dictionary. Part of the not-so-obvious problem I have with Macey is the same that I have with any author who seeks to encapsulate all the knowledge of the world on one issue in one book. The question of authorial bias manifests itself not only in what is included or excluded, but also in the even-handedness of its treatment. Macey tends to smooth over any areas of political controversy that arise all too often in a discourse that is fraught with potential conflict. For example, as I was reading the entry on Noam Chomsky, the MIT linguist who has for years been an outspoken critic of both the United States and Israel, hardly anything was written that might cast an aspersion on Chomsky's own biases. What was presented was a rather technical explanation of Chomsky's linguistic theories, a matter of concern only to other linguists. I was surprised by Macey's omission

of Frederick Jameson, one of the most outspoken Marxist critics of this century. Still, Macey's text is an indispensable tool for those who wish to learn how words affect ideas.

The entries in this dictionary are great and informative, but it just seems like it could have had even more in it (plus, there are a few entries that probably didn't need to be in there such as Karl Popper, a great philosopher of science and all, but how much does he really affect critical theory?). Still, the smaller size does make it even more portable, which is kind of a plus, and for the amount of information that is in here it's totally worth the price.

I bought this book for my graduate-level course at college named Practical Criticism (renamed to Critical Theory this year actually) and it has been so useful. It has everything in it! Or almost. I could just sit down and read some of the things in this book just for fun. It is fascinating stuff. Purchase this book now! Used or New. W/e is cheaper.

Excellent book

Returned it b/c I dropped the class

Compared to other Penguin dictionaries for academia, especially the dictionary of literary criticism and its terms, the critical theory dictionary is **severely** lacking. This is a severe drawback for a field of theory that is not only incredibly complex, where each scholar almost without fail offers a nuanced and sometimes completely new reading of a term or concept, but that is also filled with theoretical jargon (I do not mean this word as a negative evaluator, but in the strictly linguistic sense as a set of words/phrases used to convey specified meaning in a given field). As a graduate student, it would have been very helpful to have a dictionary that parses the dozens of usages of a single term, or that, in many cases, even has the damn terms. This can be especially frustrating for young critical theorists since the words (e.g. "field") are often common nouns with long, theoretically bound-up word histories, such that if you were to Google many of the terms, all you'd get is vague and unhelpful pages. Of course, in many cases, I found Penguin's dictionary of literary criticism even more useful for understanding critical theory than this dictionary. You can also turn to Oxford's "Very Short Introduction" series, for which "Critical Theory" is an excellent and helpful addition. No doubt someone will complain about my response and say I should just do the hard work of reading through hundreds of pages of theory and hopefully, one gloomy, rainy, over-read and

too-much-caffeined day, suddenly and magically come to understand the terms and theories without any help or input. To that person I would say that they don't know academia well and that, if they feel that way, they shouldn't be looking at the page for a dictionary of critical theory.

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