



The Idea of Culture

By Terry Eagleton

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Terry Eagleton's book, in this vital new series from Blackwell, focuses on discriminating different meanings of culture, as a way of introducing to the general reader the contemporary debates around it.

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The Idea of Culture By Terry Eagleton Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #554127 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Wiley-Blackwell
- Published on: 2000-05-18
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x .52" w x 6.00" l, .66 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 168 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

It is a little disconcerting, after reading the elegant and precise first chapter of Eagleton's overview of political, social and cultural concepts of culture, to find him stating at the outset of the second one: "[I]t is hard to resist the conclusion that the word 'culture' is both too broad and too narrow to be greatly useful." But his evaluation proves accurate. Drawing upon a wide range of sources, theories and disciplines--from Raymond Williams's Marxist criticism to Ruskin's aesthetic theories, Richard Rorty's pragmatic political philosophy and Althusser's political commentary--Eagleton (*Literary Theory; Myths of Power; etc.*) surveys the far-ranging and often conflicting ways "culture" might be defined and used to interpret or interact with the material world. In the first two chapters, Eagleton delivers a clear but essentially academic précis of a complicated concept. Yet in his later chapters--on the culture wars, the tension between nature and culture and the possibilities for creating a common culture--he breaks out of a purely descriptive mode and into a provocative, entertaining one, noting, for example, that Americans use the word "America" far more than Danes use the word "Denmark," commenting, "this is what happens when your view of other countries is for the most part through a camera lens or from a bomber." In this brief volume, Eagleton has produced both a thoughtful analysis of cultural theories as well as a shrewd, liberal dissection of current social and political trends. (Mar.) FYI: This is the first book in the Blackwell Manifestos series.

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From Library Journal

Eagleton's latest book promises to be an important addition to the field of cultural studies. A prominent literary critic and Marxist theorist, Eagleton writes in a style that is somewhat rambling but always colorful and lively. Placing the notion of culture in historical, philosophical, and political context, Eagleton describes the emergence of today's mass culture, with its perceived threat to traditional values. To illustrate the changing meaning of culture, he notes the views of such thinkers as Nietzsche, T.S. Eliot, and Matthew Arnold. He also quotes liberally from the works of his former teacher and mentor, Raymond Williams (*Culture and Society, 1780-1950*). The initial offering in Blackwell's new "Manifestos" series, this book is recommended for advanced undergraduate collections.

-Ellen Sullivan, *Ferguson Lib., Stamford, CT*

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Review

"In this brief volume, Eagleton has produced both a thoughtful analysis of cultural theories as well as a shrewd, liberal dissection of current social and political trends." *Publishers Weekly*

"Eagleton's latest book promises to be an important addition to the field of cultural studies." *Library Journal*

"A magnificent reassertion of timeless cultural values." *The Observer*

"A voice of sanity amid the roar of turbo-capitalism." *Independent*

"As always, Eagleton shows a provocative wealth of learning. He is able to see the many sides of a problem, to put it in context and suggest new ways of viewing it, a healthy corrective to the soundbite society." *Times Higher Education Supplement*

"Stimulating and very readable. The Idea of Culture is a book which challenges our attention." *The Irish Times*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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Victor Dinh:

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