



Resource Review

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Name of reviewed item:	Introducing Cultural Studies: Learning through Practice
Author(s) / Editor(s):	David Walton
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Review:

What a weird and wonderful book. It is the Ronseal of Cultural Studies Literature; it does what it says on the tin; or cover in this case! *Introducing Cultural Studies; Learning through Practice* manages the mean feat of making Cultural Theory accessible and practical. Packed full of 'Oversimplification Warnings' and 'Help' and 'Practice Exercises', this is the ideal textbook for Further Education and first year Higher Education Cultural Studies Students. It is also a brilliant revision and essay writing tool for more advanced learners. It is concise, honest and straightforward in its aims and content and witty in its approach. Mr Walton writes in a populist and humorous style taking on board the irony and pluralism of contemporary culture and embedding them into the very fabric of his book. This is exactly the type of book required for the fragmented, hedonistic and transitory young minds of the 21st century. It allows them to quickly learn the essentials while enjoying 'a bit of a yarn' and some rather amusing caricatures.

This innovative chronology of specific cultural theories is divided into five sections: 1. *High Culture Gladiators: Some Influential Early Models of Cultural Analysis* investigates the writings of Matthew Arnold, F.R & Q Leavis, T.S Eliot and Theodor Adorno and their contexts; 2. *The Transformative Power of Working-class Culture* takes a day at the seaside with Richard Hoggart as well as reviewing the work of E.P. Thompson and Raymond Williams; 3. *Consolidating Cultural Studies: Subcultures, the Popular, Ideology and Hegemony* introduces Stuart Hall and considers subcultures through an analysis of Quadrophenia and ideological theories of subcultural heurism; 4. *Probing the Margins, Remembering the Forgotten: Representation, Subordination and Identity* provides a basic outline of the adaptation of cultural theory by Feminists and how sexuality and ethnicity are explored through the film East is East; 5. *Honing your Skills, Conclusions and 'Begin-endings'*

consolidates the information covered in the previous chapters and ruminates on how heuristic thinking can be utilised to enable further creative criticism and research in the future. This last section also provides a reasonably comprehensive account of further reading through a summary of Walton's key points, research and references. Although 'Postmodern' in its construction and use of communicative tools, this book is also very logical and concise. Its highly readable style makes complex cultural theories, criticism and analysis accessible and offers practical conceptual tools to empower the reader to take ownership of their own understanding. It is not merely a factual account of the historical context of cultural studies; it explores the much deeper connotations of how contemporary thinking has been developed in regard to prior theorising and how these concepts can then work in practice. This makes it an excellent source for the teaching and learning of how to apply a heuristic approach to structuring arguments and responses to cultural artefacts, products and context. This does not mean however that its content is 'dumbed down'! It valiantly manages to retain all the highly academic information required for this area of study and does not shy away from using the appropriate terminology and language that Cultural Studies students must familiarise themselves with. The 'Oversimplification Warnings', 'Practice Exercises', illustrations and 'Notes' act as practical or cognitive revision for the body of text rather than as a 'gutter press' substitute.

So this is a highly successful book, in that it has accomplished its intentions, but it is also a motivational book. Its quality and character allow the reader to 'feel' the enthusiasm of its author which in turn becomes infectious, instilling in the reader a genuine sense of ebullient perturbation.