

Classics A Very Short Introduction Very Short Introductions

From Zeus and Europa, to Diana, Pan, and Prometheus, the myths of ancient Greece and Rome seem to exert a timeless power over us. But what do those myths represent, and why are they so enduringly fascinating? Why do they seem to be such a potent way of talking about our selves, our origins, and our desires? This imaginative and stimulating Very Short Introduction goes beyond a simple retelling of the stories to explore the rich history and diverse interpretations of classical myths. It is a wide-ranging account, examining how classical myths are used and understood in both high art and popular culture, taking the reader from the temples of Crete to skyscrapers in New York, and finding classical myths in a variety of unexpected places: from arabic poetry and Hollywood films, to psychoanalysis, the bible, and New Age spiritualism. 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.

This Very Short Introduction to Christian ethics introduces the topic by examining its sources and historical basis. D. Stephen Long presents a discussion of the relationship between Christian ethics, modern, and postmodern ethics, and explores practical issues including sex, money, and power. Long recognises the inherent difficulties in bringing together 'Christian' and 'ethics' but argues that this is an important task for both the Christian faith and for ethics. Arguing that Christian ethics are not a precise science, but the cultivation of practical wisdom from a range of sources, Long also discusses some of the failures of the Christian tradition, including the crusades, the conquest, slavery, inquisitions, and the Galileo affair. Placing them in the context of the theory and practice of ethics and their historical perspective, he notes the challenges they raise for Christian ethics. He concludes with a discussion of their implications in the modern era, considering how this affects our lives in the present age. 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.

At once an entrancing cultural history and a congenial guide for tourists, armchair travelers, and amateur archaeologists alike, this book takes readers through the storied past and towering present of the most famous building in the world. 35 illustrations.

A compact introduction to modernism--why it began, what it is, and how it has shaped virtually all aspects of 20th and 21st century life 'I rejoice', said Doctor Johnson, 'to concur with the Common Reader.' For the last century, the tastes and preferences of the common reader have been reflected in the American and British bestseller lists, and this Very Short Introduction takes an engaging look through the lists to reveal what we have been reading - and why. John Sutherland shows that bestseller lists monitor one of the strongest pulses in modern literature and are therefore worthy of serious study. Along the way, he lifts the lid on the bestseller industry, examines what makes a book into a bestseller, and asks what separates bestsellers from canonical fiction. Exploring the relationship between bestsellers and the fashions, ideologies, and cultural concerns of the day, the book includes short case-studies and lively summaries of bestsellers through the years: from *In His Steps* - now almost totally forgotten, but the biggest all-time bestseller between 1895 and 1945, to *Gone with the Wind* and *The Andromeda Strain*, and *The Da Vinci Code*. 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.

By his writings, the surviving bulk of which exceeds that of any other ancient author, Augustine came to influence not only his contemporaries but also the West since his time. This Very Short Introduction traces the development of Augustine's thought, discussing his reaction to the thinkers before him, and themes such as freedom, creation, and the trinity. 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.

This introduction considers whether the Trojan war actually took place and whether archaeologists have discovered the site of ancient Troy. Humour is a universal feature of human life. It has been discovered in every known human culture, and thinkers have discussed it for over two thousand years. In this Very Short Introduction Noel Carroll considers the nature and value of humour: from its leading theories and its relation to emotion and cognition, to ethical questions of its morality and its significance in shaping society. About the Series: Oxford's Very Short Introductions series offers concise and original introductions to a wide range of subjects--from Islam to Sociology, Politics to Classics, Literary Theory to History, and Archaeology to the Bible. Not simply a textbook of definitions, each volume in this series provides trenchant and provocative--yet always balanced and complete--discussions of the central issues in a given discipline or field. Every Very Short Introduction gives a readable evolution of the subject in question, demonstrating how the subject has developed and how it has influenced society. Eventually, the series will encompass every major academic discipline, offering all students an accessible and abundant reference library. Whatever the area of study that one deems important or appealing, whatever the topic that fascinates the general reader, the Very Short Introductions series has a handy and affordable guide that will likely prove indispensable.

'When Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from troubled dreams he found himself transformed in his bed into a monstrous insect ...' So begins Franz Kafka's most famous story *Metamorphosis*. Franz Kafka (1883-1924) is among the most intriguing and influential writers of the twentieth century. During his lifetime he worked as a civil servant and published only a handful of short stories, the best known being *The Transformation*. All three of his novels, *The Trial*, *The Castle*, and *The Man Who Disappeared [America]*, were published after his death and helped to found Kafka's reputation as a uniquely perceptive interpreter of the twentieth century. Kafka's fiction vividly evokes bizarre situations: a commercial traveller is turned into an insect, a banker is arrested by a mysterious court, a fasting artist starves to death in the name of art, a singing mouse becomes the heroine of her nation. Attending both to Kafka's crisis-ridden life and to the subtleties of his art, Ritchie Robertson shows how his work explores such characteristically modern themes as the place of the body in culture, the power of institutions over people, and the possibility of religion after Nietzsche had proclaimed 'the death of God'. The result is an up-to-date and accessible portrait of a fascinating author which shows us ways to read and make sense of his perplexing and absorbing work. 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.

Explores the relationship between the contemporary world and the ancient one.

Introduces major topics in ancient Greek civilization through the development of eleven characteristic city states, ranging from prehistoric Cnossos through Byzantium, and including the future Marseilles as well as Athens and Sparta.

mile Zola was the leader of the literary movement known as 'naturalism' and is one of the great figures of the novel. In

his monumental *Les Rougon-Macquart* (1871-93), he explored the social and cultural landscape of the late nineteenth century in ways that scandalized bourgeois society. Zola opened the novel up to a new realm of subjects, including the realities of working-class life, class relations, and questions of gender and sexuality, and his writing embodied a new freedom of expression, with his bold, outspoken voice often inviting controversy. In this Very Short Introduction, Brian Nelson examines Zola's major themes and narrative art. He illuminates the social and political contexts of Zola's work, and provides readings of five individual novels (*The Belly of Paris*, *L'Assommoir*, *The Ladies' Paradise*, *Germinal*, and *Earth*). Zola's naturalist theories, which attempted to align literature with science, helped to generate the stereotypical notion that his fiction was somehow nonfictional. Nelson, however, reveals how the most distinctive elements of Zola's writing go far beyond his theoretical naturalism, giving his novels their unique force. Throughout, he sets Zola's work in context, considering his relations with contemporary painters, his role in the Dreyfus Affair, and his eventual murder. 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.

Series Copy The new Very Short Introductions series offers concise and original introductions to a wide range of subjects from politics to classics. Not simply a textbook of definitions, each book in the series provides trenchant, provocative, yet balanced discussions on the central issues of the field, gives a readable historical account of the subject, and demonstrates how each particular area of study has developed and shaped society. Eventually, the series will encompass every major academic discipline, offering readers an affordable, accessible, and complete reference library. Stimulating and lively, the Very Short Introductions are indispensable guides and essential reading for anyone interested in the development of these influential fields. Providing the general reader and the student with an introduction to the central issues of political science, *A Very Short Introduction to Politics* shows how political trends and maneuvers develop and how they help shape our society. Kenneth Minogue, with his lively and popular style, begins with a discussion of issues arising from a historical account of politics, and goes on to offer chapters dealing with the Ancient Greeks and the idea of citizenship; Roman law; medieval Christianity and individualism; freedom since Machiavelli and Hobbes; the challenge of ideologies; democracy, oligarchy, and bureaucracy; power and order in modern society; and politics in the West. Readable and pithy, this entertaining introduction is perfect for anyone looking for an accessible overview of the subject.

German philosophy remains the core of modern philosophy. Without Kant, Frege, Wittgenstein, and Husserl there would be no Anglo-American 'analytical' style of philosophy. Moreover, without Kant, Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, and Heidegger, the 'Continental Philosophy' of Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze, Badiou, and Zizek, which has had major effects on humanities subjects in recent years, is incomprehensible. Knowledge of German philosophy is, then, an indispensable prerequisite of theoretically informed study in the humanities as a whole. *German Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction* discusses the idea that German philosophy forms one of the most revealing responses to the problems of 'modernity'. The rise of the modern natural sciences and the related decline of religion raises a series of questions, which recur throughout German philosophy, concerning the relationships between knowledge and faith, reason and emotion, and scientific, ethical, and artistic ways of seeing the world. There are also many significant philosophers who are generally neglected in most existing English-language treatments of German philosophy, which tend to concentrate on the canonical figures. This Very Short Introduction will include reference to these thinkers and suggests how they can be used to question more familiar German philosophical thought. 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.

Examining what landscape is, and how we use a range of ideas and techniques to study it, Andrew Goudie and Heather Viles demonstrate how geomorphologists have built on classic methods pioneered by some great 19th century scientists to examine our Earth.

This Very Short Introduction to Classics links a haunting temple on a lonely mountainside to the glory of ancient Greece and the grandeur of Rome, and to Classics within modern culture—from Jefferson and Byron to Asterix and Ben-Hur. We are all Classicists - we come into touch with the Classics daily: in our culture, politics, medicine, architecture, language, and literature. What are the true roots of these influences, however, and how do our interpretations of these aspects of the Classics differ from their original reception? This introduction to the Classics begins with a visit to the British Museum to view the frieze which once decorated the Apollo Temple at Bassae. Through these sculptures, John Henderson and Mary Beard prompt us to consider the significance of Classics as a means of discovery and enquiry, its value in terms of literature, philosophy, and culture, and its importance as a source of imagery. 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.

Is a tower block, your unmade bed, your lavatory basin, or the bicycle chained to the gate next door a work of art? Why should a novel have a beginning, a middle, and an end; or even a story? Whether we recognise it or not, virtually every aspect of our life today has been influenced in part by the aesthetic legacy of Modernism. In this Very Short Introduction Christopher Butler examines how and why Modernism began, explaining what it is and showing how it has gradually informed all aspects of 20th and 21st century life. Butler considers several aspects of modernism including some modernist works; movements and notions of the *avant garde*; and the idea of 'progress' in art. Butler looks at modernist

ideas of the self, subjectivity, irrationalism, people and machines, and political definitions of modernism as a whole.

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William Allan's Very Short Introduction provides a concise and lively guide to the major authors, genres, and periods of classical literature. Drawing upon a wealth of material, he reveals just what makes the 'classics' such masterpieces and why they continue to influence and fascinate today.

The programmes that make up the welfare state vary from nation to nation and from time to time, and the balance between markets and government, and free enterprise and social protection is perennially in question. In contemporary political debate the welfare state seems to be mostly viewed as a problem rather than a solution, and welfare programmes appear constantly on the defensive. This Very Short Introduction describes the modern welfare state, explaining its historical and contemporary significance and arguing that far from being 'a failure' or 'a problem', welfare states are an essential element of contemporary capitalism, and a vital concomitant of democratic government. In this accessible and entertaining account, David Garland cuts through the fog of misunderstandings to explain in clear and simple terms, what the welfare state is, how it works, and why it matters.

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The first book to look at this particular subject, *The Roman Book of Gardening* brings together an extraordinarily varied selection of texts on Roman horticulture, celebrating herb and vegetable gardening in verse and prose spanning five centuries. In vivid new translations by John Henderson, Virgil's *Georgics* stand alongside neglected works by Columella, Pliny and Palladius, bringing to life the techniques and obstacles, delights and exasperations of the Roman gardener. We also hear of the digging, hoeing, planting and weeding which then, as now, went into creating the perfect garden. This is a timely and valuable contribution to our understanding of gardening history, Roman culture and Latin literature.

Very Short Introduction offer stimulating, accessible introductions to a wide variety of subjects, demonstrating the finest contemporary thinking about their central problems and issues.

From Zeus and Europa, to Diana, Pan, and Prometheus, the myths of ancient Greece and Rome seem to exert a timeless power over us. But what do those myths represent, and why are they so enduringly fascinating? This imaginative and stimulating Very Short Introduction goes beyond a simple retelling of the stories to explore the rich history and diverse interpretations of classical myths in both high art and popular culture.

Voltaire's comment - 'I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it' - is frequently quoted by defenders of free speech. Yet it is rare to find someone prepared to defend all freedom of speech, especially if the views expressed are obnoxious or obviously false. So where do the limits lie? How important really is our right to freedom of speech? Here, Nigel Warburton offers a concise guide to the important questions facing modern society about free speech: Should a civilized society set limits on the freedom of speech? How can we square free speech with the sensitivities of religious and minority groups? Does copyright law clash with our right to free speech? And how have new technologies such as the Internet changed the debate? This Very Short Introduction is a thought-provoking, accessible, and up-to-date examination of the liberal assumption that free speech is worth preserving at any cost.

This is a book about the invention of Western philosophy, and the first thinkers to explore ideas about the nature of reality, time, and the origin of the universe. It begins with the finding of the new papyrus fragment of Empedocles' poem, and uses the story of its discovery and interpretation to highlight the way our understanding of early philosophers is marked by their presentation in later sources. Generations of philosophers, both ancient and modern, have traced their inspiration back to the presocratics, even though we have very few of their writings left. In this book, Catherine Osborne invites her readers to dip their toes into the fragmentary remains of thinkers from Thales to Pythagoras, Heraclitus to Protagoras, to try to fill in the bits of a jigsaw that has been rejigged many times and in many different ways. 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.

Robertson covers the life and work of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832): scientist, administrator, artist, art critic, and literary writer in a variety of genres.

Born in 1926 in France, Foucault is one of those rare philosophers who has become a cult figure. Over the course of his life he dabbled in drugs, politics, and the Paris SM scene, all whilst striving to understand the deep concepts of identity, knowledge, and power. From aesthetics to the penal system; from madness and civilisation to avant-garde literature, Foucault was happy to reject old models of thinking and replace them with versions that are still widely debated today. A major influence on Queer Theory and gender studies (he was openly gay and died of an AIDS-related illness in 1984), he also wrote on architecture, history, law, medicine, literature, politics, and of course philosophy. In this Very Short Introduction Gary Gutting presents a wide-ranging but non-systematic exploration of some highlights of Foucault's life and thought. Beginning with a brief biography to set the social and political stage, he then tackles Foucault's thoughts on literature, in particular the avant-garde scene; his philosophical and historical work; his treatment of knowledge and power in modern society; and his thoughts on sexuality. This new edition includes feminist criticisms of Foucault's apparently sexist treatment of the Jouy case, as well as a new chapter offering a unified overview of the College de France lectures, now a major focus of interest in Foucault. 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

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The Iliad and the Odyssey are the cornerstones of Western literature, inspiring artists, writers, philosophers, musicians, playwrights, and film-makers throughout history. Barbara Graziosi introduces Homer's key works and discusses the main literary, historical, and archaeological issues at the heart of Homeric studies.

Combining key titles from both Oxford's Very Short Introductions and Oxford World's Classics series, this collection includes an assortment of books that will enlighten your understanding of Islam. Containing A Very Short Introduction to The Koran, Islamic History, and Islam, plus one of the bestselling versions of the Qur'an, these books provide insight into the religious, historical, and political ideas surrounding the world of Islam. About the Series: Oxford's Very Short Introductions series offers concise and original introductions to a wide range of subjects--from Islam to Sociology, Politi.

This Very Short Introduction examines Voltaire's (1694-1778) remarkable life and career. Exploring his most important writings, the impact his work had on our understanding of the European Enlightenment, and his status as a literary celebrity at the time, Nicholas Cronk considers his continued relevance in literature, politics, and philosophy.

Offers a wealth of insight into the paradoxical nature of film, considering its role and impact on society in the 20th century as well as its future in the digital age. Original.

John Henderson gives a completely fresh and enthusiastic re-reading of Pliny's Letters, a basic text of the Latin literary canon. Full Latin texts with new translations are given for the key texts studied.

Michael Faraday is one of the best known scientific figures of all time. Known as the discoverer of electro-magnetic induction, the principle behind the electric generator and transformer, he has frequently been portrayed as the 'father' of electrical engineering from whence much of his popular fame derives. This Very Short Introduction dispels the myth that Faraday was an experimental genius working alone in his basement laboratory, making fundamental discoveries that were later applied by others. Instead, it portrays Faraday as a grand theorist of the physical world profoundly influencing later physicists such as Thomson (Kelvin), Maxwell, and Einstein. Frank A.J.L. James explores Faraday's life from his origins in eighteenth-century Westmorland and Yorkshire, his religious and scientific background, to the growth of his fame in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As well as introducing his scientific research, he also puts Faraday in the various institutional contexts in which he lived and worked, including the Royal Institution, the Royal Society, Trinity House, and other agencies of the state. James therefore provides a commentary on the rapidly changing place of science in nineteenth-century society, especially in regards to its role in government and the growth of a professional scientific community. 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.

Here, David Gwynn reflects on the remarkable legacy of the Roman Republic. The rise and fall of the Republic holds a special place in the history of Western civilization; it has been presented as a model, a source of inspiration, but also a warning. Placing the events in their wider context, he provides a fascinating history of culture and society.

To consider comedy in its many incarnations is to raise diverse but related questions: what, for instance, is humour, and how may it be used (or abused)? When do we laugh, and why? What is it that writers and speakers enjoy - and risk - when they tell a joke, indulge in bathos, talk nonsense, or encourage irony? This Very Short Introduction explores comedy both as a literary genre, and as a range of non-literary phenomena, experiences and events. Matthew Bevis studies the classics of comic drama, prose fiction and poetry, alongside forms of pantomime, comic opera, silent cinema, popular music, Broadway shows, music-hall, stand-up and circus acts, rom-coms, sketch shows, sit-coms, caricatures, and cartoons. Taking in scenes from Aristophanes to The Office, from the Roman Saturnalia to Groundhog Day, Bevis also considers comic theory from Aristotle to Freud and beyond, tracing how comic achievements have resisted as well as confirmed theory across the ages. This book takes comedy seriously without taking it solemnly, and offers an engaging study of the comic spirit which lies at the heart of our shared social and cultural life. 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.

"This book explores the ways in which ancient society thought about conflict. Many aspects of ancient warfare are examined from philosophy to the technical skills needed to fight"--Provided by publisher.

The Koran has constituted a remarkably strong core of identity and continuity for a religious tradition that is now in its fifteenth century. This Very Short Introduction explores the significance of the Koran both in the modern world and in traditional Muslim culture. Michael Cook provides a lucid and direct account of the Koran as codex, as scripture, as liturgy, and as the embodiment of truth, and examines its means of formation and dissemination. He also discusses issues of interpretation for certain key verses, demonstrating that fecundity of the text for readers throughout the world. 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.

Herodotus has come to be respected by most scholars as a responsible and important historian. Herodotus was both a critical thinker and a lively storyteller, a traveller who was both tourist and anthropologist. Like Homer, he set out to memorialize great deeds in words; more narrowly, he determined to discover the causes of the wars between Greece and Persia and to explain them to his fellow Greeks. In his hands, the Greeks' unforeseeable defeat of the Persian kings Darius and Xerxes, with their vast hosts, made for fascinating storytelling. Influenced by the work of the natural scientists and philosophers of his own and earlier eras, Herodotus also brought his literary talents to bear on a vast, unruly mass of information gathered from many interviews throughout his travels and left behind him the longest work that had ever been

