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Introducing Camus



Synopsis

Albert Camus, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1957, always refused the existentialist label with which he is usually associated. For Camus, the world was 'absurd', without purpose, leading only unto death, yet all the more invigorating precisely because of this. Long associated with Left-Bank intellectuals, Camus' real emotional centre was always his native Algeria and the poverty of his youth. This has become even clearer with the publication of his posthumous novel "The First Man", which has catapulted Camus back into the public eye after years of excommunication by the Left for his 'un-radical' views during the Algerian war. "Introducing Camus" portrays a man who was an intellectual in the tradition of the great French humanists, a Resistance fighter during World War II, and also a great sensualist for whom sun, sea, sex, football and theatre were the answer to life's absurdity.

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Customer Reviews

I wish I had picked up this book before I plodded through a THICK, renowned biography of Camus. Considering I wasn't writing a thesis on Camus, and was only interested in learning about the man for my own knowledge, "Introducing Camus" filled my needs very well. The book is set up like a comic book, with the odd "see notes below" parts, and I was able to read it in about 1.5 hours. With remarkable clarity, the book distilled Camus' essential philosophies and much of the important points in his life. But make no mistake; this book is not some superficial glamourization about

Camus. I would say that a person reading the thick biography of Camus vs. the person reading "Introducing Camus" would come away with basically the same points. Isn't that amazing? (Now I'm starting to think that the thick book was filled with WAAAAAY too much filler...how very un-Camus-esque). Not only is "Introducing Camus" factually and philosophically sound, it is also engaging and gives great background and point-of-reference when reading Camus' actual works. For example, now that I know what was going on in Camus' life when he wrote "The Plague," I can read it with more insight. And now, I'm excited to read more of Camus' works (imagine if you gave this book to your high school or college kid!) Overall, great primer for Camus. Start with this first, then read his books, and then maybe start reading those massive biographies.

Originally titled "Camus for Beginners", this concise biography combines personal information, short excerpts, and vivid cartoons to illuminate the man behind the modern literary myth. Although I had read *The Fall*, *The Plague*, *The Stranger*, and a few collections of essays a decade earlier, I had only a vague memory of Camus' actual life and conflicts. This fine book, which I read in less than two hours, remains a solid primer. Both longtime admirers of Camus and undergraduate students forced to read his celebrated novels should find this brief work a valuable investment of time. It's also worth noting that cartoons are often read by adults in Europe. The format provides readers with a superficial, yet accessible and non-threatening, way to enter into academic and philosophical discussions. College and high school teachers of French, literature, and philosophy would benefit from adding this book to their students while assigning any novel by Camus.

Not every book in the "Introducing..." series is good, but this dealing (in a comic book fashion) with the life and works of French author Albert Camus (1913-1960) is really fine. Two of his novels are covered at some length: "The Stranger" and "The Plague". Besides, we get his biography: his birth in Algeria from working-class French colonists (the so-called *pied-noirs*), his start as a novelist in Paris in the pre-World War II years, his activities during the German occupation, his political positions (after starting out in the left, he became an anticommunist in the 1950s, becoming at odds with the majority of France's intelligentsia), his position on the Algerian War (he was opposed to independence, probably out of fear for the fate of his mother, who was living there, and put forward some naive proposals for peace), his opposition to the death penalty, his philosophical positions. Recommended.

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