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How To Read Literature Like A Professor: For Kids



Synopsis

In *How to Read Literature Like a Professor: For Kids*, New York Times bestselling author and professor Thomas C. Foster gives tweens the tools they need to become thoughtful readers. With funny insights and a conversational style, he explains the way writers use symbol, metaphor, characterization, setting, plot and other key techniques to make a story come to life. From that very first middle school book report to that first college course, kids need to be able to understand the layers of meaning in literature. Foster makes learning this important skill fun and exciting by using examples from *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* to *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, from short stories and poems to movie scripts. This go-to guide unlocks all the hidden secrets to reading, making it entertaining and satisfying.

Book Information

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Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

I bought this for my nine-year-old in hopes of reading it with him. After pre-reading it I have decided to not use it with him. I found parts of the book inappropriate for young children, and I also found many of the examples not relevant to kids. For example chapter one discusses a character and his quest and uses the example of a teenager having to run an errand for his mom on a bike he is embarrassed of (it's 1968). At the store he sees the girl he likes in the car of his enemy where she is

laughing and fooling around, so the boy decides to enlist for Vietnam. This example is used to illustrate quests found in literature, but I think it is hard for kids to relate to. In another chapter there is a discussion on Vampires (when will the Twilight influence finally end?) and Dracula and the character is described as "downright sexy". Later it is stated that "a nasty old man, attractive but evil, violates young women, leaves his mark on them, steals their innocence..." Then the author states that vampire stories have more to them than scaring us, "we might conclude that it has something to do with sex." In discussing Shakespeare he talks how Woody Allen turned "A Midsummer Night's Dream" into "A Midsummer Night's Sex Comedy". There are also references to Gilligan's Island, Rocky and Bullwinkle, East of Eden, Beauty Queens, and many more that kids will not get. And this brings me to the biggest problem with this book. It is not relevant or appropriate for kids, especially not ages 8 and up, but it is too light and quick a read to be relevant to teenagers. I am not sure who this book is written to. I could use the ideas from the book, which are good, and find my own examples, but then I am doing most of the work. My advice, pre-read this at a library before buying to see if it is a good match for you and your child. I think you may have decided to pass on it as I have.

I was so excited when I saw this book was going to be released. I'd recently read and enjoyed "How To Read Literature Like a Professor", and was looking forward to having a version for my boys to read. Imagine my surprise when a girl fooling around in a car is mentioned on page 1 of chapter one (the exact same example in the adult version of the book). Then I hit the chapter on vampires. Dracula is described as sexy. "A nasty old man, attractive but evil, violates young women, leaves his mark on them, steals their innocence, and leaves them helpless followers in their sin." We might "conclude that" vampires have "something to do with sex." In addition, many of the stories used as examples are not stories that most 8-12 year olds would've read. Older stories and poems are referenced (Hemingway, Poe, etc.), and while these books should be read, they usually haven't been by the targeted age group. I was left feeling disappointed in the book. I felt like the author simply removed random parts from his adult version to make the book shorter for kids, without paying attention to what he left in. Examples should've been changed to be more relevant and appropriate for the 8-12 year old audience he's claiming on the cover. There are too many inappropriate examples for my 7, 9, & 10 year olds, and I feel like my 12 & 13 year olds might as well read the adult version.

I am a huge fan of the original book. I own 60 copies and I use it to teach English 10 Honors. It's an

excellent resource, but two things drive my students crazy: 1. Foster cultivates a voice that's cheeky to the point of arrogance. 2. Foster's examples are so esoteric that they've rarely read them and they get lost in the long explanations about them. When I saw this book, I thought: Aha! Change the examples and the tone for kids. PERFECT. But nope. While *some* of the examples have changed, they've changed to things like Dr. Seuss. Not exactly appropriate for my audience. And the tone--even much of the language and many of the examples--is exactly the same. PLUS, he's gotten rid of the "sex" chapters--two chapters that would have done best with a genuine makeover, and two chapters that are essential to navigating some of the banned/challenged books on our booklist. Bummer.

Don't be afraid to buy this book because it's inappropriate (and all the crap on TV and FB, etc.), be afraid to buy this book because: a. references outdated or not relevant to kids today b. overly simplified--all the greatness of the original H2RLLAP...gone... c. because it's simplified, without generalization and practice, the lessons of the book are hard to retain. If you teach out of this book while using other materials--so they can practice what they read, expand upon it and get better examples from a teacher/parent--perhaps it's useful. For those concerned about inappropriate materials... take it on an individual basis. Personally, I would rather guide kids through the imagery of violence, sex, etc. (of which this book contains only mild doses) through an academic, literary lens than just try to selectively shield it from them. Why not use this book to talk about beer commercials and reality tv shows, which are the real inappropriate materials kids encounter.

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