



Reading with Oprah: The Book Club that Changed America

Kathleen Rooney

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Adored by its fans, deplored by its critics, the Oprah Book Club has been at the center of arguments about cultural authority and literary taste since its inception in 1996. Virtually everyone seems to have an opinion about this monumental institution with its revolutionary and controversial fusion of the literary, the televisual, and the commercial. *Reading with Oprah* by Kathleen Rooney is the first in-depth look at the phenomenon that is the OBC.

Rooney combines extensive research with a lively personal voice and engaging narrative style to untangle the myths and presuppositions surrounding the club, to reveal its complex and far-reaching cultural influence, confronting head-on how the club became a crucible for the heated clash between “high” and “low” literary taste. Comprehensive and up-to-date, the book features a wide survey of recent commentary, and describes why the club closed in 2002, as well as why it resumed almost a year later in 2003, with a new focus on “great books.” Rooney also provides the most extensive analysis yet of the Oprah Winfrey–Jonathan Franzen contretemps.

Through her close examination of each of the club’s selected novels, as well as personal interviews and correspondence with OBC authors, Rooney demonstrates that in its tumultuous eight-year history the OBC has occupied a place of prominence unique in the culture that neither its supporters nor detractors have previously given it credit for.

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