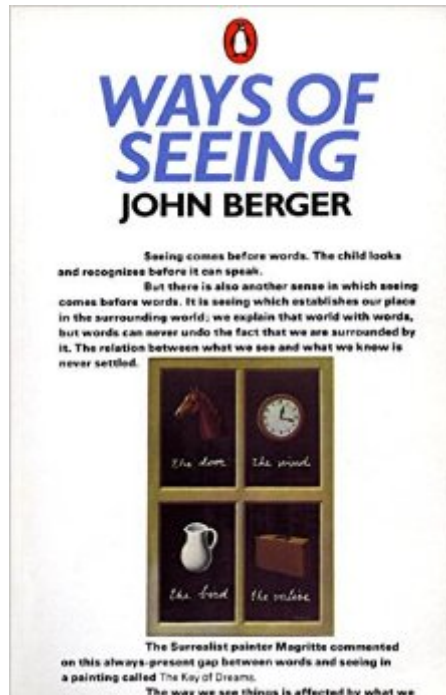


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# Ways Of Seeing: Based On The BBC Television Series



## Synopsis

John Berger's Classic Text on Art John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* is one of the most stimulating and the most influential books on art in any language. First published in 1972, it was based on the BBC television series about which the (London) Sunday Times critic commented: "This is an eye-opener in more ways than one: by concentrating on how we look at paintings . . . he will almost certainly change the way you look at pictures." By now he has. "Berger has the ability to cut right through the mystification of the professional art critics . . . He is a liberator of images: and once we have allowed the paintings to work on us directly, we are in a much better position to make a meaningful evaluation" — Peter Fuller, Arts Review "The influence of the series and the book . . . was enormous . . . It opened up for general attention to areas of cultural study that are now commonplace" — Geoff Dyer in *Ways of Telling* Winner of the 1972 Booker Prize for his novel, *G.*, John Peter Berger (born November 5th, 1926) is an art critic, painter and author of many novels including *A Painter of Our Time*, *From A to X* and *Bento's Sketchbook*.

## Book Information

Paperback: 176 pages

Publisher: Penguin Books; Reprint edition (December 1, 1990)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0140135154

ISBN-13: 978-0140135152

Product Dimensions: 5 x 0.6 x 7.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

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## Customer Reviews

thirty years on, 'Ways of Seeing' continues to be a major primary textbook, not just for those studying or interested in fine art, but in any of the humanities from literature to cinema. You can see the appeal for lecturers - difficult but essential theorists such as Benjamin and Barthes are explained with bite-size lucidity, even if this sometimes has the effect of caricaturing their work. As Geoff Dyer has noted, much of the impetus given to Cultural Studies, the critical/academic form of post-modernism, can be traced to Berger's TV series and this book: many of the questions raised

and areas for study pinpointed have generated a whole academic industry. In seven chapters, Berger assaults the traditional bastions of art 'appreciation', with its obfuscating jargon, elitist interests and, most damagingly, its insistence on timeless, non-'historical' values. Three of these essays are text-free, image-based, and Berger claims all the essays can be read independently and in any order, as part of the process of 'deconstructing' the apparatus of art criticism that includes laying bare the mechanics, manipulations and limitations of his arguments, and undermining the very idea of coherent authorship by suggesting the name 'John Berger' signifies a five-piece collective. Contrary to Berger's claim, the image-essays can only be properly understood in connection with the textual ones. These are four now-classic pieces of critical iconoclasm. The first synthesises Benjamin's famous essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', and discusses how art, and the culture it embodies, has lost its old rarefied authority in a demystifying age of image overload. Chapter three analyses the classic tradition of nude paintings, and the misogynistic/patriarchal worldview it upheld.

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