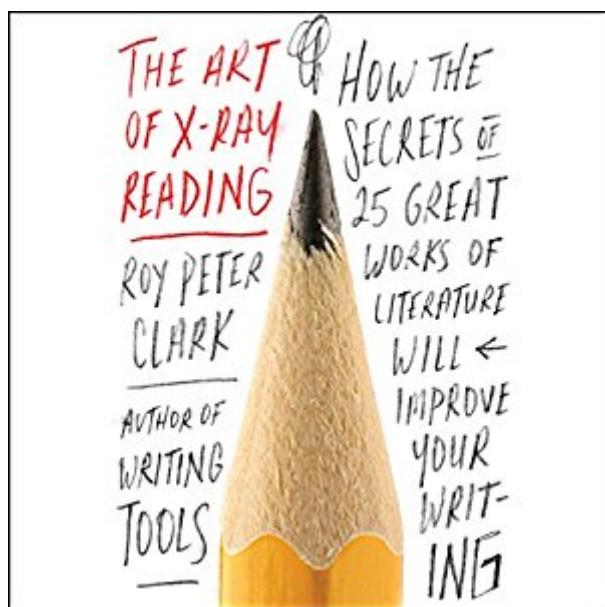


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The Art Of X-Ray Reading: How The Secrets Of 25 Great Works Of Literature Will Improve Your Writing



Synopsis

Roy Peter Clark, one of America's most influential writing teachers, offers writing lessons we can draw from 25 great texts. Where do writers learn their best moves? They use a technique that Roy Peter Clark calls X-ray reading, a form of reading that lets you penetrate beyond the surface of a text to see how meaning is actually being made. In *The Art of X-Ray Reading*, Clark invites you to don your X-ray reading glasses and join him on a guided tour through some of the most exquisite and masterful literary works of all time, from *The Great Gatsby* to *Lolita* to *The Bluest Eye* and many more. Along the way, he shows you how to mine these masterpieces for invaluable writing strategies that you can add to your arsenal and apply in your own writing. Once you've experienced X-ray reading, your writing will never be the same again.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Roy Peter Clark appreciates great literature. In *The Art of X-Ray Reading*, he shares his enthusiasm for beautifully worded passages from novels, short stories, non-fiction, and poetry. Clark urges us to read more deeply and thoughtfully--to discern the moving parts, the strategies that create the effects we experience from the page--effects such as clarity, suspense, humor, epiphany, and pain. Stimulating our minds and awakening our senses may enable us to understand and internalize the techniques that accomplished writers use to convey ideas and emotions memorably. Clark uses selections from such luminaries as Geoffrey Chaucer, William Shakespeare, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Vladimir Nabokov, John Steinbeck, Harper Lee,

Zora Neale Hurston, William Butler Yeats, Toni Morrison, and Donna Tartt to illustrate how x-ray reading works. The author takes us on an enchanting and often thrilling journey. His well-chosen excerpts and keen analyses elucidate such subjects as connotation and denotation; symbolism; alliteration; the length and placement of words and phrases; foreshadowing; allusions; concrete details versus abstract concepts; and setting. No detail is too insignificant if it enables a reader to see as a writer. "X-Ray Reading" is amusing, playful, and timely (Clark enlivens his narrative by frequently alluding to popular culture). It is exhilarating to dig beneath the surface of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Yeats' *The Second Coming*, Dickens' *Bleak House*, Shirley Jackson's *The Lottery*, Rachel Carson's *The Sea Around Us*, and Lauren Hillenbrand's *Seabiscuit*. We get glimpses of the difficult choices that writers make: How should they structure their sentences, paragraphs, and chapters? What specific phrases should they use and why? How can they employ such seemingly extraneous elements as the weather and inanimate objects to illuminate important themes? In this edifying and entertaining book, Roy Peter Clark celebrates the art of communicating effectively through literature while providing aspiring writers and avid readers with moments of discovery.

There is something different here. Usually, when I'm reading books on the art of better writing, I feel I'm being spoken to by authors who need to tell, and so I get told. Being told doesn't allow me company and because there is enough disconnection in this world already, I just remain unmoved but with new information. Roy Peter Clark seemed to join my eyes as I read over every word. He was there with me, and I was there with him and we were sharing the same thoughts that are written. Occasionally I'd get a little jolt and realize it was only Roy sharing his thoughts but it was never long before I'd be found back in the comfort of the oneness again. His style of communication left me feeling like a writer, not because I just read a book on it, but because I just EXPERIENCED being a writer. This is an internal journey, that's why when closing the book the feeling of having just experienced something was always there. You and the author will go inside some famous books and you'll know you are entering another world as soon as a certain first sentence becomes a door handle. This EXPERIENCE alone is worth considering to purchase. It's rare and you cannot return as the same person once you turn a few pages. This is what I found anyway. I'm no longer someone who thinks about myself as a writer one day, and I don't care about the fact that I have had nothing published yet, I am a writer now. I am a writer now because I read this book and this book gave me the qualified experience. The fuel that this experience has put in my tank can do nothing less than

set off a chain reaction. Forget a ticket to Bali - there is much more to gain for far less the cost by opening the covers of this book and diving in.

I'm a voracious reader, but this book made me feel like I've never truly read a book. I mean that in the most complimentary way. I didn't realize how much I was missing when I read, until I read this book. It's a very eye-opening experience that lead to many aha moments and a ton of "OMG, I can't believe I missed that!" moments. Each chapter focuses on a specific work and at the end of each chapter is a writing lesson. These lessons are the key elements that the reader should take away from that chapter. At the end of the book is a section called "Great Sentences From Famous Authors" and this is a chance to practice your new x-ray reading skills. Following this exercise are the "Twelve Steps to Get Started As An X-Ray Reader" which is a good reference to help new x-ray readers begin reading on a whole new level. Out of the 25 works mentioned in this book, I've only read about half of them. Now that I have a new pair of x-ray reading glasses on, I want to reread these (as well as some of the others) with fresh eyes. I love The Great Gatsby, but wow, did I miss a lot! I missed the themes and symbolism, especially. I'm a Charles Dickens fan and I read Donna Tartt's The Goldfinch, but somehow I missed her parallel to A Christmas Carol. How in the world did I miss that? (I knew the concept of intertextuality, but I didn't know that's what it was called.) I love it when I notice it in literature, but I'm sure there are many times when it slips by me unnoticed. One of the most eye-opening experiences was the chapter about Hemingway. Although I never read A Farewell to Arms, I did read The Sun Also Rises. I was very disappointed in it, so I gave it a low two-star rating. I noticed it received a lot of high ratings and I couldn't understand why. I wasn't fond of his terse prose and Hemingway fans are always saying that if you don't like Hemingway, then you don't understand him. I thought they were just being pretentious snobs, but after reading The Art of X-Ray Reading, I realize that I truly didn't understand Hemingway. I missed his rhythm and his intentional repetition and omission of words. I was too busy reading on the level of the story that I wasn't reading it on the level of the text. This is one of those books that you'll not only want to add to your home library, especially aspiring writers, but also a book that you'll want to read more than once. I checked this book out at my local library, but I already know that I'll be buying it, rereading it and write in it. I want to absorb everything Roy Peter Clark teaches in this book (and his other books) and internalize it completely. I highly recommend this book to avid readers and aspiring writers.

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