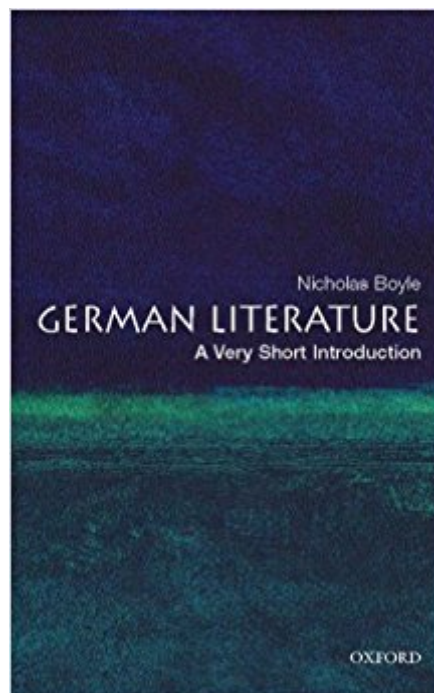




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German Literature: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions)



Synopsis

German writers, from Luther and Goethe to Heine, Brecht, and Günter Grass, have had a profound influence on the modern world. This Very Short Introduction presents an engrossing tour of the course of German literature from the late Middle Ages to the present, focussing especially on the last 250 years. Emphasizing the economic and religious context of many masterpieces of German literature, it highlights how they can be interpreted as responses to social and political changes within an often violent and tragic history. The result is a new and clear perspective which illuminates the power of German literature and the German intellectual tradition, and its impact on the wider cultural world. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

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Customer Reviews

German Literature: A very short introduction by Nicholas Boyle, Oxford University Press, 2008, 182 ff. The author, who is the Schröder Professor of German and President of Magdalene College at Cambridge University, makes the point in the Introduction to his book that literature is about more than the texts themselves. They reflect on and impact on the world through their authors and readers. German literature has excelled in subjective poetic literature but has contributed rather less to the more objective realistic novel. Boyle makes the point that the term 'German literature' embraces a wider field than just books generated by authors within what we now recognise as the German nation. During the Middle Ages the German nation was slowly establishing an identity for itself through the increasing importance of the university throughout German lands after the Reformation. Boyle maintains that Luther's 'revival of Augustine's distinction between the earthly and the heavenly cities was the true source of the modern dualism of matter and mind that is usually attributed to Descartes.' In fact, the Reformation that Luther inspired did much to promote the influence of the universities. The first Prussian university was established in Prague in 1348 and in this period there were 40 universities in Germany compared with just two in England. Meister Eckhart, Jacob Böhme, Martin Luther, Gottfried Leibniz, Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Klopstock, to mention just a few well-known writers cited by Boyle, emerged from within this cultural setting. Johannes Gutenberg invented printing in the 15th century and this led to widespread dissemination of literature. 'The History of Dr John Faust' appeared in Frankfurt in 1587.

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