



The New Literary Middlebrow: Tastemakers and Reading in the Twenty-First Century

Beth Driscoll

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There is an increasingly dominant force in twenty-first century book culture: the new literary middlebrow. Today's most influential literary tastemakers are descended from the middlebrow institutions of the early twentieth century, operating with new global reach and across the mass media. In this innovative and provocative study, Driscoll defines, describes and defends the middlebrow as a set of institutions and practices that provide real satisfactions for contemporary readers. The New Literary Middlebrow offers a comprehensive definition of middlebrow literary culture, describing it through eight features: it is middle class, feminized, reverential towards elite literature, commercial, emotional, recreational, earnest and mediated. Different expressions of the middlebrow are explored in a series of detailed case studies, including Oprah's Book Club, the Man Booker Prize, literary festivals, teachers, educators and the Harry Potter phenomenon. These case studies reveal new insights into the relationships between tastemakers and readers that are shaping contemporary literary culture.

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