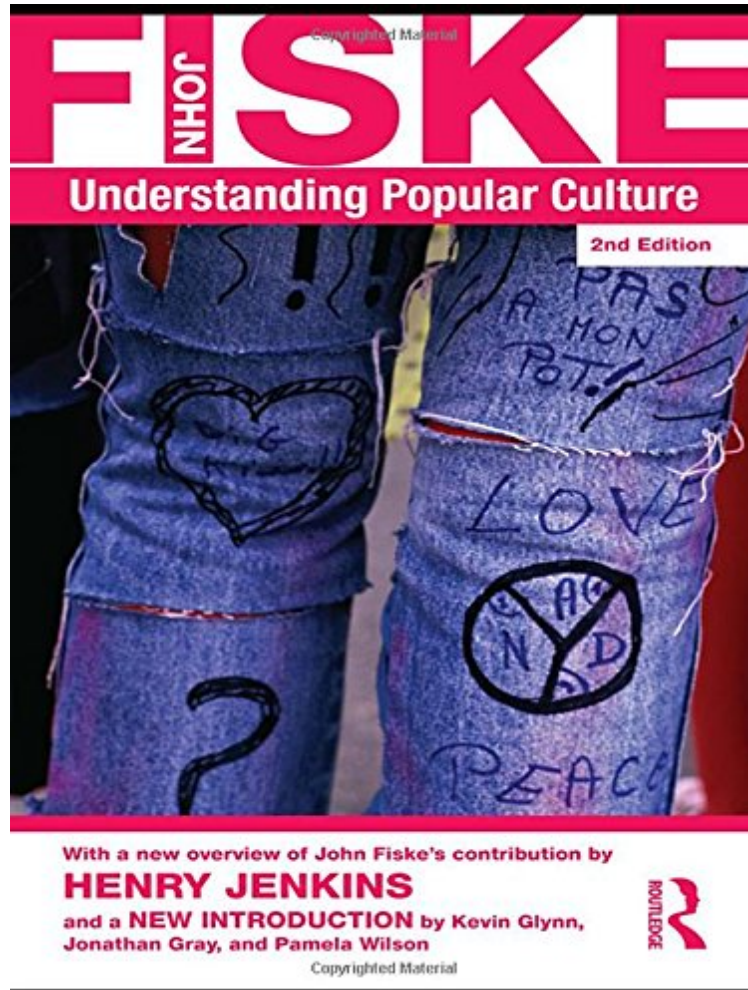


Understanding Popular Culture (Volume 4)

John Fiske

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John Fiske : Understanding Popular Culture (Volume 4) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Understanding Popular Culture (Volume 4):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I love this bookBy K. EllisI first read Fiske in 1996 as a first year student studying "English". I doubt that type of degree would exist anymore but fiske's analysis of jeans is as insightful as ever. I experienced many lightbulb moments reading this book in its entirety. His explanation of the "producerly text" has reconciled my love of popular culture with my disappointment with the way it reproduces the dominant ideology.1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. I find some of the theories very dated but good information for a historical perspectiveBy Seattle GirlI find some of the theories very dated but good information for a historical perspective.This book was not in the greatest condition - even though it was new. There was a sticky substance on part of the cover and the cover was bent which makes a difference when trying to resell. I wish I had bought the Kindle

version. Half of the book is a forward.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Good Theoretical Grounding for Cultural HistoriansBy RDDJohn Fiske's "Understanding Popular Culture" serves primarily as a companion to his reader, "Reading the Popular". Fiske examines the different facets of popular culture using commodities such as denim jeans, Madonna, the television show Dallas, and more. Fiske argues, Popular culture is deeply contradictory in societies where power is unequally distributed along axes of class, gender, race, and the other categories that we use to make sense of our social differences. Popular culture is the culture of the subordinated and disempowered and thus always bears within it signs of power relations, traces of the forces of domination and subordination that are central to our social system and therefore to our social experience. Equally, it shows signs of resisting or evading these forces: popular culture contradicts itself (pg. 4-5).Fiske continues, Popular culture always is part of power relations; it always bears traces of the constant struggle between domination and subordination, between power and various forms of resistance to it or evasions of it, between military strategy and guerrilla tactics (pg. 19). His approach sees popular culture as potentially, and often actually, progressive (though not radical), and it is essentially optimistic, for it finds in the vigor and vitality of the people evidence both of the possibility of social change and of the motivation to drive it (pg. 21). Fiske writes, All popular culture is a process of struggle, of struggle over the meanings of social experience, of ones personhood and its relations to the social order and of the texts and commodities of that order (pg. 28). He further argues, The politics of popular culture is that of everyday life (pg. 56).Examining popular texts, Fiske argues, The social experience that determines the relevances that connect the textual to the social and that drive this popular productivity is beyond textual control, in a way that is different from the more specifically textual competence and experience of the writerly reader of the avant-garde text (pg. 104). He believes that critically-derived texts offer useful insight. Of tabloid fodder, Fiske writes, The popularity of such sensational publications is evidence of the extent of dissatisfaction in a society, particularly among those who feel powerless to change their situation, and the fact that there are more of them, and that they are more visible, in the United States than in, for example, Australia or the United Kingdom may say something about the exclusiveness of American ideology and the harshness with which it treats those it excludes (pg. 117). More generally, he writes, In popular culture, texts as objects are merely commodities, and as such they are often minimally crafted (to keep production costs down), incomplete, and insufficient unless and until they are incorporated into the everyday lives of the people (pg. 123). To this end, A popular text, to be popular, must have points of relevance to a variety of readers in a variety of social contexts, and so must be polysemic in itself, and any one reading of it must be conditional, for it must be determined by the social conditions of its reading (pg. 141).Fiske concludes, Popular culture not only maintains social differences, it maintains their oppositionality, and peoples awareness of it. It can thus empower them to the extent that, under the appropriate social conditions, they are able to act, particularly at the micropolitical level, and by such action to increase their sociocultural space, to effect a (micro)redistribution of power in their favor (pg. 161). Finally, Popular culture always entails a set of negotiations between the center and the circumference, between the relatively unified allegiances of the power-bloc and the diversified formations of the people, between singular texts and multiple readings (pg. 171).

This revised edition of a now classic text includes a new introduction by Henry Jenkins, explaining Why Fiske Still Matters for today's students, followed by a discussion between former Fiske students Kevin Glynn, Jonathan Gray, and Pamela Wilson on the theme of Reading Fiske and Understanding the Popular. Both underline the continuing relevance of this foundational text in the study of popular culture. What is popular culture? How does it differ from mass culture? And what do popular "texts" reveal about class, race, and gender dynamics in a society? John Fiske answers these and a host of other questions in Understanding Popular Culture. When it was first written, Understanding Popular Culture took a groundbreaking approach to studying such cultural artifacts as jeans, shopping malls, tabloid newspapers, and TV game shows, which remains relevant today. Fiske differentiates between mass culture the cultural "products" put out by an industrialized, capitalist society and popular culture the ways in which people use, abuse, and subvert these products to create their own meanings and messages. Rather than focusing on mass culture's attempts to dominate and homogenize, he prefers to look at (and revel in) popular culture's evasions and manipulations of these attempts. Designed as a companion to Reading the Popular, Understanding Popular Culture presents a radically different theory of what it means for culture to be popular: that it is, literally, of the people. It is not imposed on them, it is created by them, and its pleasures and meanings reflect popular tastes and concerns and a rejection of those fostered by mass culture. With wit, clarity, and insight, Professor Fiske debunks the myth of the mindless mass audience, and demonstrates that, in myriad ways, popular culture thrives because that audience is more aware than anyone guesses.

'Well-written and accessible. Making the difficult seem easy is Fiske's great talent. No introductory reading list in the field would be complete without a Fiske.' - Sociology Magazine
About the Author John Fiske is Professor Emeritus in the Department of Communication Arts at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA.