



A Feeling for Books: The Book-of-the-Month Club, Literary Taste, and Middle-Class Desire

Janice A. Radway

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Deftly melding ethnography, cultural history, literary criticism, and autobiographical reflection, *A Feeling for Books* is at once an engaging study of the Book-of-the-Month Club's influential role as a cultural institution and a profoundly personal meditation about the experience of reading. Janice Radway traces the history of the famous mail-order book club from its controversial founding in 1926 through its evolution into an enterprise uniquely successful in blending commerce and culture. Framing her historical narrative with writing of a more personal sort, Radway reflects on the contemporary role of the Book-of-the-Month Club in American cultural history and in her own life. Her detailed account of the standards and practices employed by the club's in-house editors is also an absorbing story of her interactions with those editors. Examining her experiences as a fourteen-year-old reader of the club's selections and, later, as a professor of literature, she offers a series of rigorously analytical yet deeply personal readings of such beloved novels as *Marjorie Morningstar* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Rich and rewarding, this book will captivate and delight anyone who is interested in the history of books and in the personal and transformative experience of reading.

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