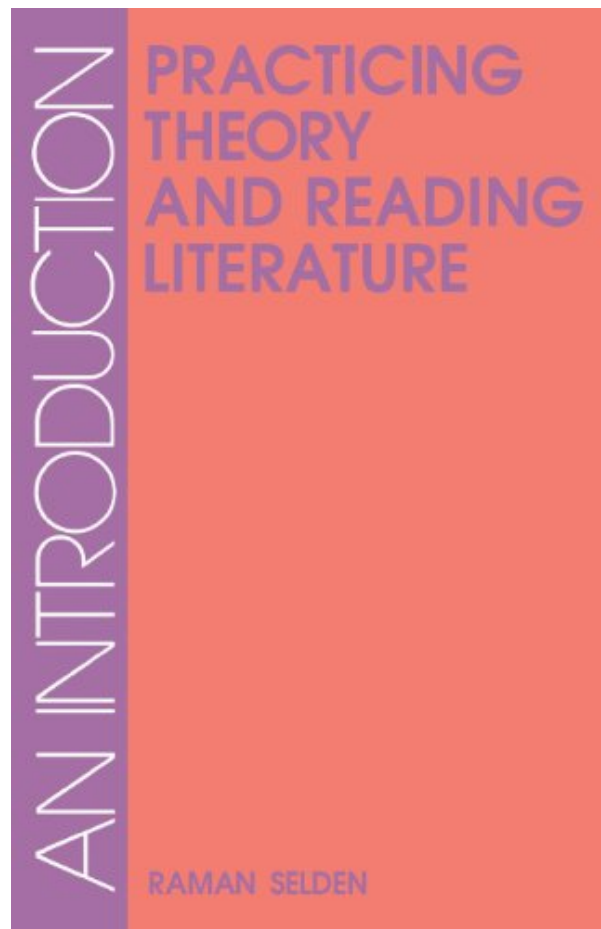
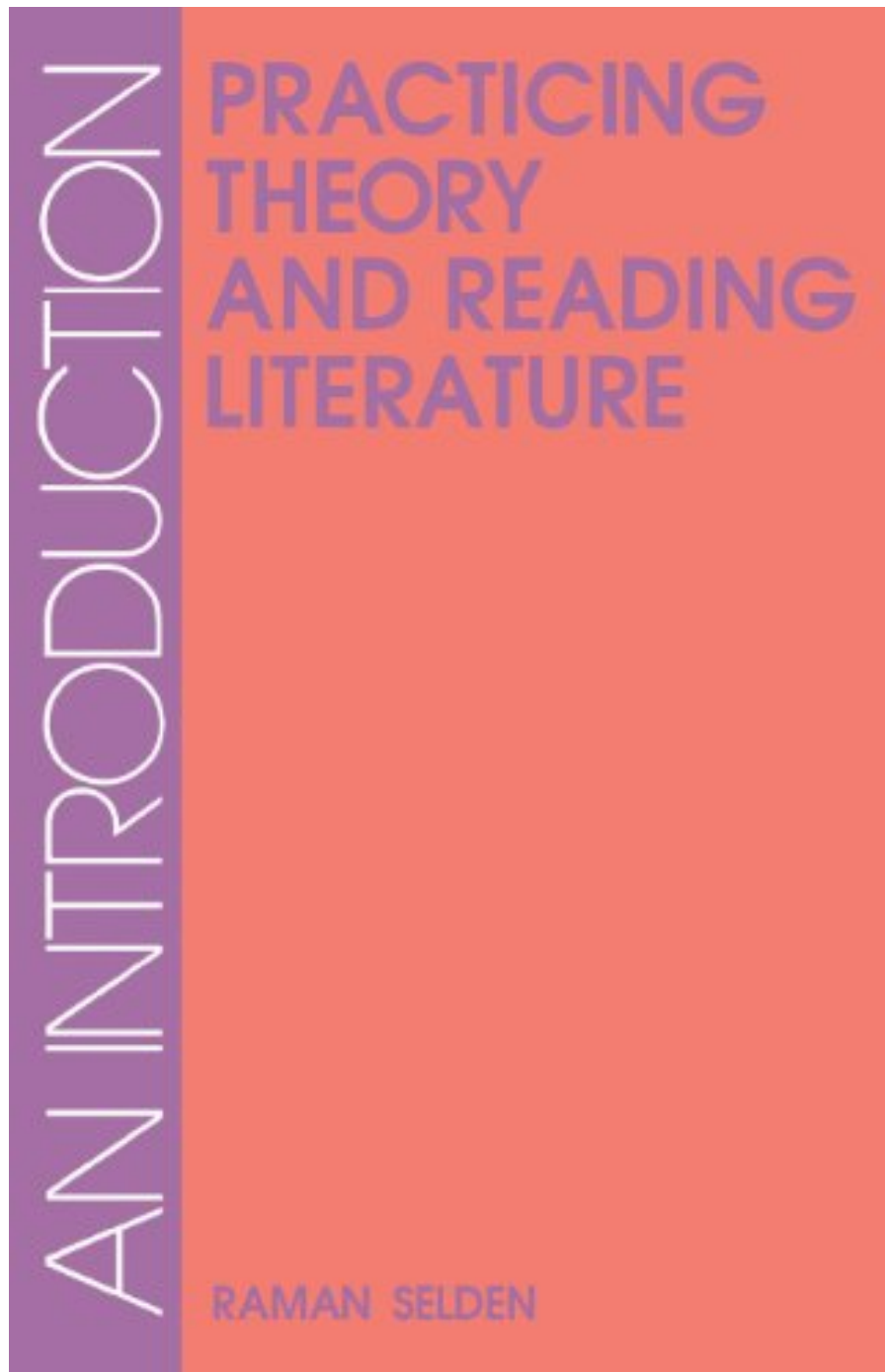


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Features

- Raman Selden is a professor of English literature at Lancaster University

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Great companion to A Reader's Guide

By A Customer

This book is a great companion piece to Selden's other book A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory. The theories discussed in A Reader's Guide are here applied to classics of world literature (ex. poems by Wordsworth and Keats). Works of literature are interpreted from the point of view of each of the major theories discussed in A Reader's Guide (New Criticism, Russian Formalism, Structuralism, Poststructuralism, Psychoanalysis, Marxism, Feminism, Post-colonialism, etc.). This will help literature students in writing papers from various critical perspectives.

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Graduate Level: Not for the Novice

By Martin Asiner

In PRACTICING THEORY AND READING LITERATURE, Raman Selden improves on his earlier A READER'S GUIDE TO CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE by delving more intimately into the byzantine pathways that mark current critical theory. In his newer effort, Selden assumes in the reader a working knowledge of literary criticism. His essays are more likely useful for the graduate student than the undergraduate in that he intersects the abstractness of theory with the concrete reality of applied criticism to specific works. His book focuses on Anglo-American theory, Russian Formalism, Structuralism, Post-Structuralism, Reader-Response, Marxist and Feminist criticisms. Since his text dates from 1989, Selden omits mention of Eco Criticism. Yet, even when he wrote, other theories were well entrenched and one wonders why he omitted Gay/Lesbian, Postcolonial, Afro-American, and Archetypal theories. For

considerations of these latter modes, I recommend Lois Tyson and Charles Bressler, both of whom write for the novice in mind.

Selden's penchant for zeroing in on the minutia of critical tidbits is both his strong and weak points. I had no problem following his sometimes meandering mode of thought but only because I have a strong background in theory. I appreciated his trenchant analyses of works that range the gamut of western literature, but I could also commiserate with those who come to Selden without previous exposure at least on an undergraduate level. Selden is at his best when he deals with topics not well addressed in other texts like defamiliarization, binaries, Barthes' codes, and reception theory. I also liked his set of concluding exercises that give the reader an opportunity to absorb an admittedly large number of abstruse terms and concepts and apply them to specific tasks using clearly identified schools of theory. Such writing tasks are self-imposed and self-analyzed. If the reader is lucky enough to have a graduate professor critique the result, then that reader will almost certainly have learned a great deal. If not, then that reader will still benefit although perhaps not as much. Overall, Selden's text is a welcome addition for one who seeks to hone the tools of a challenging craft.

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