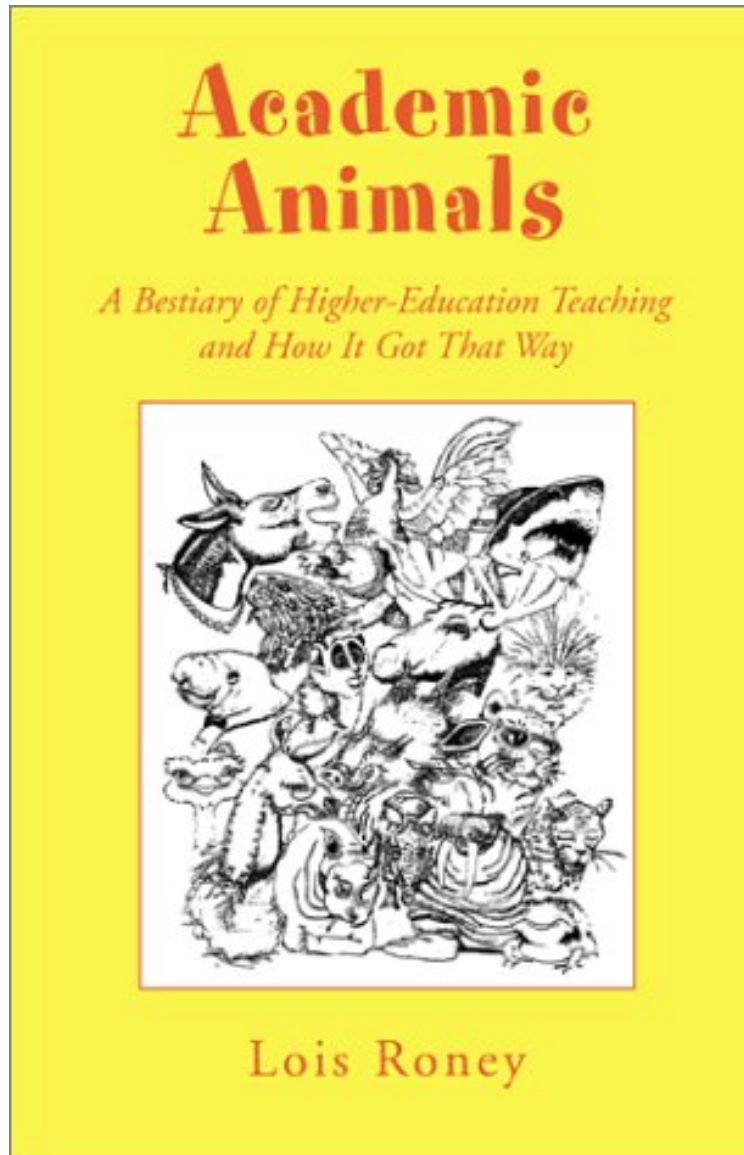


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Academic Animals: A Bestiary of Higher-Education Teaching and How It Got That Way

Lois Roney

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Lois Roney : Academic Animals: A Bestiary of Higher-Education Teaching and How It Got That Way before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Academic Animals: A Bestiary of Higher-Education Teaching and How It Got That Way:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Dare Educators Look at Themselves?By Kay Hoyle NelsonIn a

stunning satire, *Academic Animals* sketches the educators commonly found on our American campuses. This 21st century bestiary, patterned after the medieval allegorical treatise, opens with the strutting and crowing rooster. This academic visionary has reached his apotheosis, espousing a theory of Collective Spontaneity--his recommended replacement for the more tedious study and reasoning required for learning. But if we initially watch him with some amusement, our initial response can quickly slip into more serious reflection, and then into a discomfiture. While the first creature in this panorama gains our attention with the not so outlandish promotion of an all-encompassing theory, the last one shows us the price of such fads. The collection concludes with the manatee, the great undergraduate teacher. However, since such creatures are nearly extinct, we find ourselves observing one of academe's ubiquitous committee meetings, this one convened to determine the latest criteria for the Teacher of the Year award. Immediately, we discover that the top criteria will be those related to the bottom line--the actual dollars gained from class tuition minus instructor salary, or the recognition earned through the teacher's public appearances, presentations, interviews. While this bestiary does not require a reading from beginning to end--since each sketch offers a self-contained habitat--a reading of all eighteen chapters leads to an astonishingly coherent and cogent argument against the prevailing conditions in post-secondary education. For those like myself who inhabit a small corner of this world, it is a powerful reminder of what we have gained and what we have lost over the past three or four decades. For those who only gaze upon this strange landscape, it provides easy access to the issues. Lois Roney brings us face to face with a state of affairs which one might fully comprehend only after many years of observation, reading, and reflection. For this reader, the environment and the inhabitants seem painfully accurately. Personally, I have had to step aside for the boar, the faculty bully who takes over all subjects and space for his personal turf. I have had to flee the raging leopard, the feminist who lashes out against those who do not subscribe to her singular view; I have had to slink down in my seat in deference to the walrus, education's elder statesman who asserts that a second-grade version of "show and tell" in the college classroom will sufficiently examine the complex and complicated learning arenas facing our future teachers. This satire is finely wrought. But were it simply the work of a detractor, it would have less merit. Decidedly, it is not. Its author has been deeply touched by the erosion of our educational mission, and with sharp contrasts, she demonstrates what has been gained and lost. At one point, we see the school of sharks, the critical theorists holding high the 20th century pronouncements of Derrida, Adorno, Althusser, and Foucault; this scholarly following has turned its wits to the clearing the waters of dissenters. But later, we find the loris, an underpaid, overworked, unacknowledged adjunct faculty, laboring away from the communal fray and with single-minded devotion pursuing the nearly forgotten ideas of the 5th century Roman statesman and philosopher Boethius. One quite remarkable reminder of our gains and losses emerges in the depiction of two teachers managing their classroom time. The ostrich, the academic inadequate, fills us the class hour with roll call, announcements, and explanations of assignments. But the moose, the politically marginalized faculty, uses each minute for teaching. A close reading of a Shakespeare sonnet is designed to cultivate not only an appreciation of the poem and its meaning but also a recognition of the value of our words. (Indeed, the model of exemplary teaching, alone, is worth the price of the book.) And for those who might wonder about the use of a medieval genre as a vehicle for a contemporary critique, an appendix of the real life counterparts confirms the aptness. Final assessment? *Academic Animal: A Bestiary of Higher-Education Teaching and How It Got That Way* should be required reading for all educators, and recommended reading for administrator, students, and parents as well. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Recommended reading for students or educators. By Midwest Book Review. *Academic Animals: A Bestiary Of Higher-Education Teaching And How It Got That Way* by medievalist scholar and educator Lois Roney is an informed and informative, fact-based, 277 page fiction which looks at higher-education teaching and likens the personality categories and behavior traits of professors to various animal types. Despite the tongue-in-cheek animal approach, the issues addressed are quite serious, and *Academic Animals* is recommended reading for students or educators looking for insights on how to best get along with the folks in charge of instruction and grades, as well as non-specialist general readers who enjoy a good novel written with an iconoclastic flair. *Academic Animals* is also available in paperback (1401002471, [money amount]) and as an eBook (140100248X, [money amount]). 0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Animals are my business! By djAs an Animal Behaviorist and a some times Functional Morphologist, I found this author does quite a good job of choosing an animal and describing the human academic's behavioral and physical counterpart. When I read about mother and father beaver, I said to myself, every university/college has a pair of these coddling nurturers, either already in place or "in the making" (and beavers are hard to get rid of, once established in an area). I couldn't decide where GW Bush fits in: either an impassive Walrus who is quoted saying "the public has no right to criticize....they don't understand it." or the rooster who teaches most of his class in absentia as he is on the road lecturing about his new "superfield of knowledge" that he just dreamed up. GW is not mentioned in the book, but I found myself thinking about where to put him. Then again, would GW fit in ANYWHERE in Academia?!

