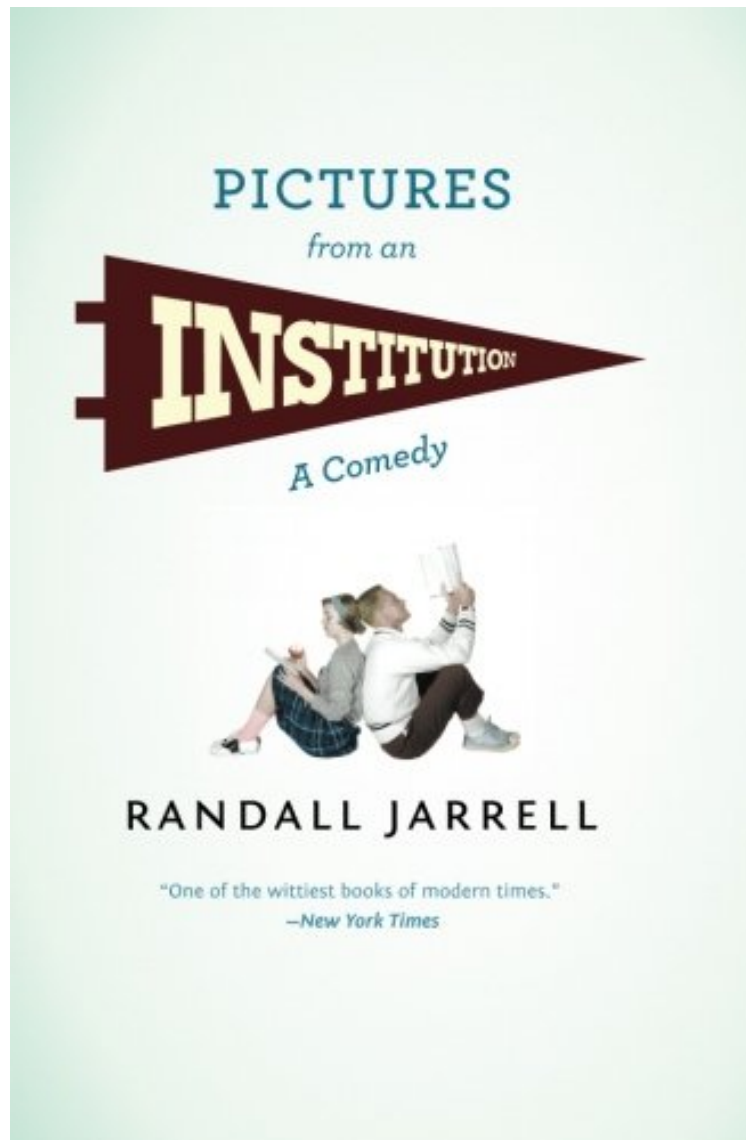


[Pdf free] Pictures from an Institution: A Comedy (Phoenix Fiction)

Pictures from an Institution: A Comedy (Phoenix Fiction)

Randall Jarrell

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#419719 in Books Randall Jarrell 2010-04-30 2010-04-30 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.00 x .80 x 5.25l, .65 #File Name: 0226393755296 pages Pictures from an Institution A Comedy | File size: 35.Mb

Randall Jarrell : Pictures from an Institution: A Comedy (Phoenix Fiction) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Pictures from an Institution: A Comedy (Phoenix Fiction):

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Her muse brooded over Gertrude with calm eyes and snaky locks By Wanda B. Red This is the famous send-up of academic life at a small women's college modeled on Sarah Lawrence and featuring the acerbic woman novelist, Gertrude Johnson, based on Mary McCarthy. Its wit and sophistication demonstrate that academic pretentiousness and political correctness cannot be claimed as inventions of the 60s, 70s,

80s etc. This book was published in 1952 and is still as timely today as the day it was written. At Benton College, explains Jarrell, "just as ordinary animal awareness has been replaced in man by consciousness, so consciousness had been replaced, in most of the teachers..., by social consciousness." Gertrude is merciless as she sends up the foibles of her faculty "colleagues." But Gertrude has a foible of her own, and not only that her "French was so bad that anyone could understand every word of it": "Gertrude knew the price of every sin and the value of none." There is no place in her world for the good or the simple, as Jarrell performs a send-up of his own on the cynical novelist. At the same time -- and despite the sweet Constance, the kind and elegant Miss Batterson, or the modest, modernist twelve-tone composer Gottfried Rosenbaum -- Jarrell portrays the world of Benton with nearly unremitting sarcasm himself. When Gertrude tries to write her novel about Benton drawn from her anthropological observation of its denizens, she attempts to endow it with a lively plot. But anyone who has read thus far (p. 215) in Jarrell's plotless book knows that, as the narrator informs Gertrude, "nothing ever happens at Benton." The one character in this novel who dies has to get a job somewhere else in order to get the thing done. As the title indicates these chapters are sketches, "pictures from an institution." Though they go nowhere, they remain caustic, richly imagined, and absolutely devastating of human pretense. The book is least convincing when it is being kind, as for example when a clumsy and pompous studio art teacher abruptly produces a work of beauty. But even such reversals are effective because they train one to adjust to the unexpected. A book best savored by being read slowly.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A must-read for anyone interested in 20th-century novels. By gregh This is satire of the American university scene, presumably in the 1950's. It's brilliant. The author, Randall Jarrell is a poet, and he may be close to the persona of the narrator, also a poet. The narrator stands outside the circle of professors to some extent and takes a rather detached view of them. His observations are uncanny and you could almost guess that a poet wrote the novel; it's uniquely expressive. Whole pages are quotable. Furthermore, this is more than satire. There is a positive element in the novel represented, at the top, by the composer, a benevolent and cultured old Viennese Jew, and his wife. At first, the old composer seems as if he might be a caricature, like the poor old professor in "The Blue Angel." Eventually, we see that he and his wife have qualities that none of the other characters (possibly excepting the narrator and his wife) have a chance of acquiring. Above all, they have balance, culture, and kindness. The malicious novelist hates the old composer because she can't pigeon-hole him, and she secretly suspects that he sees through her. Altogether, this is one of the best American novels of the last century.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Dr R Forsberg By Dr. R.P. Forsberg While quite a venerable publication, and in some ways dated, it still rings true as to academic politics and behind the scenes goings on at universities. As a 35 year professor myself, I attest to its exposition of academic silliness, escapades, egos and political intrigue. As the common observation notes, "Academic politics are so vicious because so little is at stake." This book takes a snide look at such goings on. Probably not for the non-academic person, nor for the new generation of young academics, but perfect for us older, cynical, weathered academics. It does, sometimes, lag or lapse into sort of uninteresting side tales, but these are minor and not numerous. The positives outweigh the negatives.

Beneath the unassuming surface of a progressive women's college lurks a world of intellectual pride and pomposity awaiting devastation by the pens of two brilliant and appalling wits. Randall Jarrell's classic novel was originally published to overwhelming critical acclaim in 1954, forging a new standard for campus satire—and instantly yielding comparisons to Dorothy Parker's razor-sharp barbs. Like his fictional nemesis, Jarrell cuts through the earnest conversations at Benton College—mischievously, but with mischief nowhere more wicked than when crusading against the vitriolic heroine herself. "A most literate account of a group of most literate people by a writer of power. . . . A delight of true understanding."—Wallace Stevens "I'm greatly impressed by the real fun, the incisive satire, the closeness of observation, and in the end by a kind of sympathy and human warmth. It's a remarkable book."—Robert Penn Warren "Move over Dorothy Parker. Pictures . . . is less a novel than a series of poisonous portraits, set pieces, and endlessly quotable put-downs. Read it less for plot than sharp satire, Jarrell's forte."—Mary Welp "One of the wittiest books of modern times."—New York Times "[T]he father of the modern campus novel, and the wittiest of them all. Extraordinary to think that 'political correctness' was so deliciously dissected 50 years ago."—Noel Malcolm, Sunday Telegraph "A sustained exhibition of wit in the great tradition. . . . Immensely and very devastatingly shrewd."—Edmund Fuller, Saturday Review "[A] work of fiction, and a dizzying and brilliant work of social and literary criticism. Not only 'a unique and serious joke-book,' as Lowell called it, but also a meditation made up of epigrams."—Michael Wood

.com Randall Jarrell's only novel features a Bryn Mawr-like women's college in which whispers and verbal shivs and sycophancy rule. "Half the campus was designed by Bottom the Weaver, half by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe; Benton had been endowed with one to begin with, and had smiled and sweated and spoken for the other." The institution's star-struck head is a Clintonsque young man particularly adept at raising money in Hollywood and who "wanted you to like him, he wanted everybody to like him--it was part of being a president; but talking all the time was too." Unfortunately, his new creative-writing hire only likes him the first time they meet. Thenceforth, she not only stirs things up but skewers them as well. When the book was first published in 1954, most considered Gertrude Johnson to

be a none-too-veiled portrait of Mary McCarthy. (The Partisan , for instance, failed to run a planned excerpt for fear of litigation.) "As a writer Gertrude had one fault more radical than all the rest: she did not know--or rather, did not believe--what it was like to be a human being. She was one, intermittently, but while she wasn't she did not remember what it had felt like to be one; and her worse self distrusted her better too thoroughly to give it much share, ever, in what she said or wrote." Pictures from an Institution is a superb series of poisonous portraits, set pieces, and endlessly quotable put-downs. One reads it less for plot than sharp satire, of which Jarrell is the master. "[An] exquisite, unerring comedy of manners. . . . [P]erhaps the funniest book I have ever read." (Cathleen Schine New York of Books)"Mr. Jarrell is on the side of the angels. His is a divine meanness, and he exposes his female writing devil punitively, matching her stream of poisonous wisecracks with a series of coruscating cracks of his own worthy of Dorothy Parker at her most hilarious and deadly."