



The Oprah Affect: Critical Essays on Oprah's Book Club

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Essays explore the broad cultural impact of Oprah's Book Club.

The Oprah Affect explores the cultural impact of Oprah's Book Club, particularly in light of debates about the definition and purpose of literature in American culture. For the critics collected here, Oprah's Book Club stands, in the context of American literary history, not as an egregious undermining of who we are and what we represent, as some have maintained, but as the latest manifestation of a tradition that encourages symbiotic relationships between readers and texts. Powered by women writers and readers, novels in this tradition attract crowds, sell well, and make unabashed appeals to emotion. The essays consider the interlocking issues of affect, affinity, accessibility, and activism in the context of this tradition. Juxtaposing book history; reading practices; literary analysis; feminist criticism; and communication, religious, political, and cultural studies; the contributors map a range of possibilities for further research on Oprah's Book Club. A complete chronological list of Book Club picks is included.

Cecilia Konchar Farr is Professor of English and Women's Studies at the College of St. Catherine and author of *Reading Oprah: How Oprah's Book Club Changed the Way America Reads*, also published by SUNY Press.

Jaime Harker is Assistant Professor of Cultural Studies and Writing Across the Curriculum at the University of Mississippi and author of *America the Middlebrow: Women's Novels, Progressivism, and Middlebrow Authorship between the Wars*.

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