



# The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction

By Jonathan Culler

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The primary task of literary theory, Jonathan Culler asserts in the new edition of his classic in this field, is not to illuminate individual literary works but to explain the system of literary signification?the rules and conventions that determine a reader's understanding of a text and that make literary communication possible. In this wide-ranging book, he investigates the possibilities of a semiotics of literature. A new preface places *The Pursuit of Signs* in the context of major developments in the study of literature since publication of the original Cornell edition in 1981.

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## **The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction** By Jonathan Culler Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #588920 in Books
- Published on: 2002-03-22
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.26" h x .65" w x 5.56" l, .67 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 272 pages

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Review

**'Twenty years ago, if you wanted to know where literary theory was at, I'd say semiotics, and Culler's *Pursuit of Signs* was the best way to see the links. Today? Same answer. Overview, criticism, problems and solutions: Culler offers them all in each chapter, on key topics and questions of the humanities. The book has the same urgency and acuity that it had then. Except that, with the interdisciplinary turn taking hold, literary theory itself, through this book, becomes a much more widespread tool for cultural analysis.'**

About the Author

Jonathan Culler is Class of 1916 Professor of English at Cornell University. His book, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics, and the Study of Literature*, won MLA's Lowell Prize and established his reputation as analyst and expositor of critical theory. His other books include *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism*; *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction*; and *Ferdinand de Saussure* (all published by Cornell), as well as *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* and *Theory of the Lyric*.

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