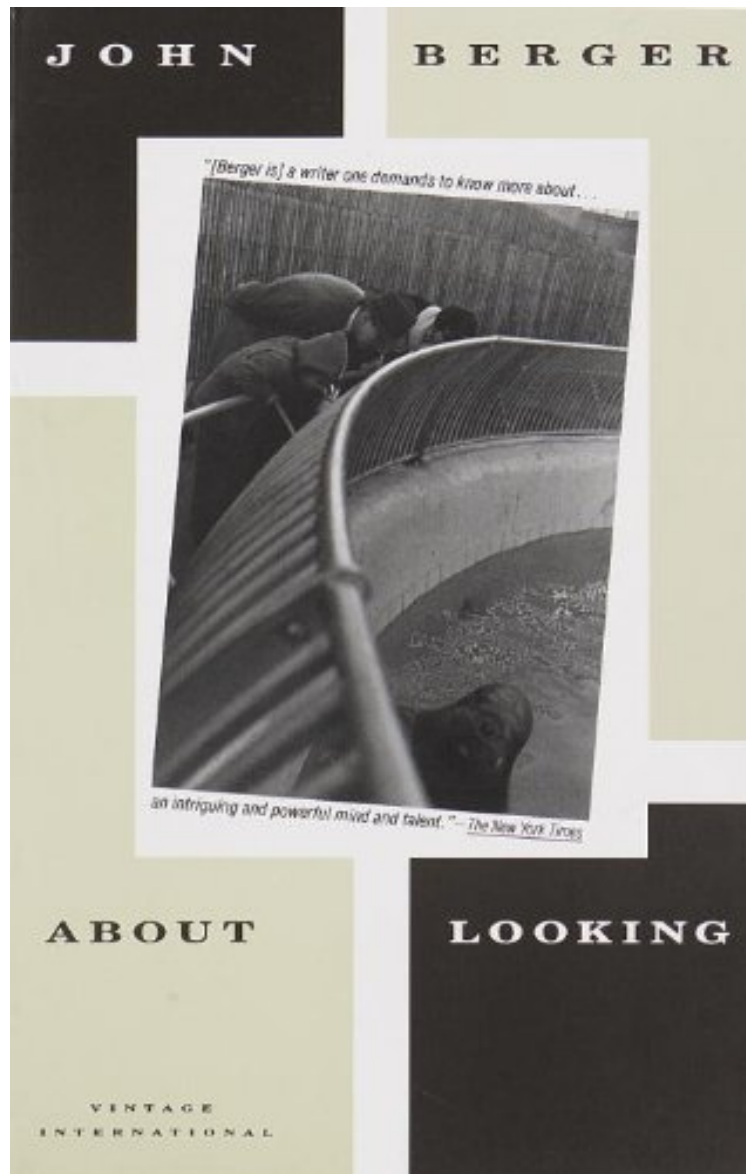


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## About Looking (Vintage International)

*John Berger*

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**John Berger : About Looking (Vintage International)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised About Looking (Vintage International):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy BradAnimal Studies 1011 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A Smart, Impassioned, Eloquent, and Illuminating Collection of EssaysBy John MaderaJohn Berger's ABOUT LOOKING is a smart, impassioned, eloquent, and illuminating collection of essays. Highlights for me: the essay "Why Look at Animals," (a reread); the section on photography; and the essays on Francis Bacon,

Giacometti, and Rodin. Suffused throughout is Berger's welcome Marxist humanism, reflected in his keen attention to and advocacy for the oppressed and otherwise marginalized. 88 of 92 people found the following review helpful. How little we appreciate visually. By taking a rest. Most of what our eyes take in is filtered, as we cannot process all that is within the field of our vision. Were there no limits, sleep would be required for the vast majority of each 24-hour period. Our brain provides filters that allow selective acknowledgement or perhaps isolated concentration on those visual cues that we deem important. Mr. John Berger's book, "About Looking", will radically change your perception of what you see. Much of the book is dedicated to explaining how various artists' works should be visually understood, what a casual viewer would observe as opposed to someone who is trained in art. I have generally found the long-winded, affected, and pretentious descriptions of art by "Art Experts" to be ridiculous at best and coma inducing more the norm. As Mr. Berger takes you through various artists and how he "sees" their work the language can still seem a bit affected, but as you read, this man uses the words he needs. To suggest he is affecting his explanations would be a petty way to express one's ignorance. Read what he says, and you will see things, as you have not before. I enjoyed the entire book, however the essays, "Why Look At Animals, and, Uses of Photography", were of greatest interest. They went beyond the explanation of expanding the methods of how the visual can be expanded and included History, Anthropology, and Sociology as well. Many people find zoos artificial, perverse, or even fraudulent. When you read this man's explanation of Animals, our relationships to them over time and how we see them, and they us, regardless of what you now feel you will feel differently. The same is true in his essay on photography. The science is relatively new, the use and invasion of the camera has become something so common the practice of using a camera is barely noticed. There are the occasional eruptions over privacy, surveillance, and "Big Brother", but those that suggest we are not already a society who have given up much of their privacy, are deluding themselves. Mr. Berger does not just opine on the subject. Court cases, the use of the camera in all its incarnations is explored more deeply than a casual look would suggest there is material to talk about. This is not a book by a shallow charlatan picking off a couple of quick tricks that make you say hmmmmmmmm. He does show that even when the filtered information arrives we see very little of what reaches us; we rarely gain the benefit of all the information. He demonstrates how a bit of inquisitiveness can make what seems ordinary spectacularly special.

As a novelist, art critic, and cultural historian, Booker Prize-winning author John Berger is a writer of dazzling eloquence and arresting insight whose work amounts to a subtle, powerful critique of the canons of our civilization. In *About Looking* he explores our role as observers to reveal new layers of meaning in what we see. How do the animals we look at in zoos remind us of a relationship between man and beast all but lost in the twentieth century? What is it about looking at war photographs that doubles their already potent violence? How do the nudes of Rodin betray the threats to his authority and potency posed by clay and flesh? And how does solitude inform the art of Giacometti? In asking these and other questions, Berger quietly -- but fundamentally -- alters the vision of anyone who reads his work.