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What makes a work of literature good or bad? How freely can the reader interpret it? Could a nursery rhyme like Baa Baa Black Sheep be full of concealed loathing, resentment, and aggression? In this accessible, delightfully entertaining book, Terry Eagleton addresses these intriguing questions and a host of others. *How to Read Literature* is the book of choice for students new to the study of literature and for all other readers interested in deepening their understanding and enriching their reading experience.

In a series of brilliant analyses, Eagleton shows how to read with due attention to tone, rhythm, texture, syntax, allusion, ambiguity, and other formal aspects of literary works. He also examines broader questions of character, plot, narrative, the creative imagination, the meaning of fictionality, and the tension between what works of literature say and what they show. Unfailingly authoritative and cheerfully opinionated, the author provides useful commentaries on classicism, Romanticism, modernism, and postmodernism along with spellbinding insights into a huge range of authors, from Shakespeare and J. K. Rowling to Jane Austen and Samuel Beckett.