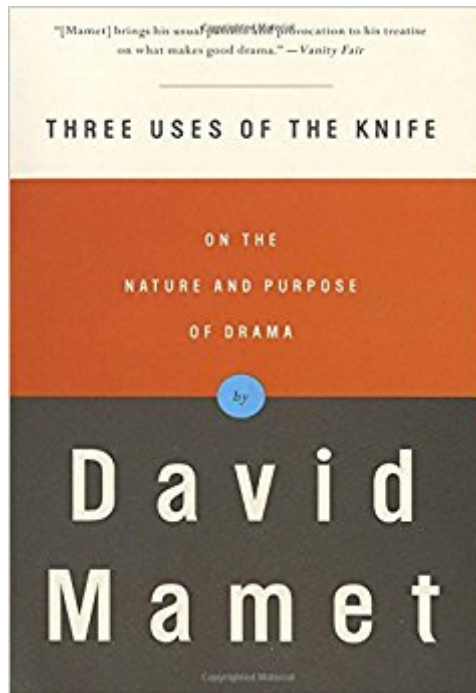




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Three Uses Of The Knife: On The Nature And Purpose Of Drama



Synopsis

The purpose of theater, like magic, like religion . . . is to inspire cleansing awe. What makes good drama? And why does drama matter in an age that is awash in information and entertainment? David Mamet, one of our greatest living playwrights, tackles these questions with bracing directness and aphoristic authority. He believes that the tendency to dramatize is essential to human nature, that we create drama out of everything from today's weather to next year's elections. But the highest expression of this drive remains the theater.

With a cultural range that encompasses Shakespeare, Brecht, and Ibsen, *Death of a Salesman* and *Bad Day at Black Rock*, Mamet shows us how to distinguish true drama from its false variants. He considers the impossibly difficult progression between one act and the next and the mysterious function of the soliloquy. The result, in *Three Uses of the Knife*, is an electrifying treatise on the playwright's art that is also a strikingly original work of moral and aesthetic philosophy.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Playwright David Mamet's three lectures at Columbia University are ostensibly about issues of dramatic structure, but as they unfold, and Mamet continually explores the relationship between dramatic structure and the lives we live, much broader concerns are revealed. Here, for example, is Mamet on political propaganda: It is ... essential to the healthy political campaign that the issues be largely or perhaps totally symbolic--i.e., non-quantifiable. Peace With Honor, Communists in the State Department, Supply Side Economics, Recapture the Dream, Bring Back the Pride--these are

the stuff of pageant. They are not social goals; they are, as Alfred Hitchcock told us, the MacGuffin.... The less specific the qualities of the MacGuffin are, the more interested the audience will be.... A loose abstraction allows audience members to project their own desires onto an essentially featureless goal. Although occasionally academic, the overall tone of the lectures is consistent with Mamet's no-nonsense manner of speech. He has no time for obfuscation and little time for repetition, save when he must absolutely employ it for emphasis. He is passionate about good theater, and passionate about the truth. *3 Uses of the Knife* makes an excellent companion piece to his *True and False*, which addressed similar philosophical matters in the form of advice on the actor's craft. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

One of America's leading living playwrights has crafted three short essays beginning with the premise that it is "our nature to dramatize." The belief in the centrality of drama to our daily lives and the centrality of our daily lives to good drama is the recurrent theme of his ruminations here. While he disdains the current vogue for "problem plays," he avoids attacking any of his contemporaries or their works. And without offering a how-to guide for aspiring playwrights, he provides some interesting thoughts on the inevitable difficulty in creating a convincing second act. Known and respected for his ability to create hyperrealistic dialog, Mamet ultimately reveals the theoretical justification for the sort of drama he writes so well. The text reads a bit like a lecture and never quite convinces the reader that this is a fundamental redefinition of drama. Still, it will be compelling to students of theater and serves as a good companion to Mamet's advice to actors, *True and False* (LJ 10/1/97). Recommended for academic and large public libraries. ?Douglas McClellmont, New York Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

It's long become customary to nickname David Mamet as "controversial", "acerbic", "opinionated" and the like... Evidently, he's making someone nervous. So much so that they're willing to exploit unsubstantiated, desperate, primitive mantras for debasing their "Nemesis". I hope he's taking it as a compliment. Come to think of it, what can be more dangerous than a powerful, rational thinker, a one of a kind intellectual, an eloquent artist on his quest for truth? Why, he would have been among the first ones to be eliminated by any totalitarian regime! As for the "*Three Uses of the Knife: On the Nature and Purpose of Drama*": this book is an enlightened, aphoristic conversation that celebrates moral reasoning and good taste. I wholeheartedly recommend it and hope you enjoy it as much as I did.

Playwright David Mamet primarily enforces the idea that theatre is a mirror of society by comparing theatrical Drama to often mundane aspects of everyday, ordinary life. This book is free of formula and influences the reader to recognize dramatic patterns throughout their day that could benefit their writing and experience as an audience member.

a wonderful book for writers , directors. actors and storytellers of all persuasions. A definite must read for any one who wants his audience absorbed into the drama of his story.

You will find no better explication of drama. Period. Mamet is a genius with words and emotions. This treatise is as valuable for a novelist or a storyteller as it is for a screenwriter or playwright. Absolutely astounding.

It's entertaining and highly informative. I'm sure to read it and reference it again and again.

Mamet is Mamet. If that doesn't say anything to you, then buy the book or watch Glengarry Glen Ross or House of Games

Wow! A lot of serious thinking and insights. So far, I've read it only once. I'll probably reread it every few months.

Iconoclastic and true.

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