



Green: The History of a Color

Michel Pastoureau , Jody Gladding (Translator)

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From Reader Review Green: The History of a Color for online ebook

Jérémie says

Après avoir lu le bleu, le noir (passionnant) je suis passé au vert. Encore une fois l'impression d'être moins bête une fois le livre fini.

Susan says

Gorgeous book about how green was viewed throughout the ages, what the color signified, and why it went in and out of favor. Very interesting tidbits throughout the book but also a LOT of obscure detail that might lose the everyday reader.

Yvonne O'connor says

Man, who knew you could have this much information and historical background on a color???

Yoruichi says

d'instinct, ce n'est pas la couleur dont l'histoire m'intéressait le plus. mais il s'avère qu'elle est aussi passionnante que pour le noir. d'ailleurs, ce livre contient moins de jugement de valeurs sur la fin que pour noir: histoire d'une couleur.

Arielle says

2018 Reading Challenge - A book with your favorite color in the title

Richard says

I enjoyed the other books in the series more. Green seems some how insignificant when compared to the other colors that I have read so far. It is a color that seems closely related to blue, both in my mind, and historically according to the book. Maybe it would have been possible to treat green as a sub-part of "Blue". Still worth a read, particularly since the books go quickly. I should warn the books are expensive and short. Best to get from your library, if they have circulating, not reference, copies.

Maria says

a little better, leaving aside cypasted passages from the Blue book

Barbara Phillips-Farley says

This is just what the title states, the history of a color. The author previously wrote on the histories of blue and black. He is French and pretty much limits his evidence to European attitudes. An interesting read.

Rebecca says

"Green corresponds to what represents, in human society, the bourgeoisie; it is an immobile element, self-satisfied, limited in all directions. This green is similar to a fat cow." [Kadinsky on the colour green in 1911] (p. 202)

"Formerly neglected, rejected, unloved, green has become the messianic color: it is going to save the world."
[Pastoureau on the changes of attitudes to green] (p. 221)

Above all this book shows the changes in attitudes over the centuries to the colour green in Western society, from ancient times up until today. Both for green in itself, but also in comparison with colours in general - what they symbolized (when such signals were much stronger than they are today, even if they do still exist), how they were used and how they were perceived. It is a fascinating journey for a colour which really has had to come to stand for quite different things. There is everything from the people (against the ruling classes), fickleness and bad luck, poison, nurturing and nature. Some of this is just strange to a modern mind (how many now connect Judas with the colour green, for example?), others are still with us.

This is quite an intriguing study on the changes of how the world is perceived and how everything changes over time - including how to view a colour. It is really disproving the statement made by Johannes Itten addressing Bauhaus students in 1922:

"The laws of colors are eternal, absolute, timeless, as valid in the past as at the present moment." (p. 203)
Pastoureaux does not agree, nor can any reader of this book.

verbava says[illegible]

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Anne says

As I'm starting to write my review I'm not quite sure how to rate this book but maybe if I talk it out, perhaps I'll know by the end.

To start, when the title says "History" and it's really not joking! Sheesh, I mean, the author dropped the word historiography multiple times in the opening pages and generally went about his scholarly way from there. To put it another way, this book is not like the popular micro-histories I've enjoyed in the past. The author is, above all else, a historical scholar, and this is written in a very, very scholarly historical way. Despite that (somewhat stuffy style), it was dripping in fabulous tidbits. I learned so much about the history of the color green!

Actually, that brings me one of my biggest petty annoyances with the book. The author clearly delineates in the introduction that this is going to be the *European* history of the color green. Fine, I respect sticking to an area of expertise and not overreaching. But I admit that I almost stopped reading at that point because I felt this author never even had a stray thought to consider calling it Green: The European History of a Color [The author is lucky that it reminded me of Eddie Izzard's joke about Europe being where the history comes from.]. There were a few other bits of Euro-centrism that tried my patience (e.g. Babar the elephant dude in green) but I tried to be patient.

To re-emphasize, this really was a deep dive into the European history of green. A continent which may have been the focus of various "world" history classes from my high school and college years but whose history is way, way beyond me [I confess, I'm not your typical history-loving librarian]. LOL, the author would mention the Duke of Chutney or the Red Barony or something and I would stop and ponder if I was supposed to have any familiarity with that person. I'd look it up in the index and verify some of those details - but wait! There is no index in the book so I'll leave you to speculate who he was talking about.

But I guess it's worth repeating; I really did learn a lot about green across the history of Europe. And if one wants an interesting lens in which to explore the history of a continent, color is actually a great vehicle as it crossed paths with religion, business, society and more. Plus, the book is an aesthetic delight filled with beautiful illustrative examples.

Hmmm, guess that sounds like a four-star review. Maybe I'll even read one of the other colors by the author.

Therese Broderick says

The cover photo of this book is tantalizing, the author's discussions are tantalizing, the color illustrations throughout this coffee-table-sized book are tantalizing. Written by a scholar, this 240-page historical treatment is nevertheless lively and appealing to the general reader; you can fruitfully enjoy its somewhat chronological chapters even if you browse them non-sequentially. Certainly, as you would expect, the art

history of paint pigments is unfolded within these pages, but so too is the story of green within other realms of religion, folk lore, warfare, poetry and stage plays, the fabric industry, medicine, national flags, chemistry, fashion, sports competitions, and ecology. This book delighted me with so many instances of delicious and little-known facts, with so many moments of intellectual glee, that I hesitate to raise two, perhaps frivolous, complaints: One -- this 2013/2014 publication makes no mention of what role is now played by green in the world of cyberspace, photo altering, website design, or digital colorization (in fact, the book includes nearly no website or other internet citations). Two -- the book largely neglects the gigantic world-wide automobile industry which, it could be argued, has manufactured cars in almost every color imaginable, EXCEPT, curiously, a wide range of greens (acknowledging, of course, the forest green of Subaru, the jungle green of Jeep, and the flagrantly yellow-peagreen of a 2015 Kia.) My final note -- MANY THANKS to Jody Gladding, the translator of the author's original French.

Jeff says

Pastoureau has made no secret of the fact that green is his favorite color, so his study of "Green" does, at moments, feel a little indulgent. He seems to repeat himself a bit more than he did in his amazing cultural history of "Blue," or the equally compelling "Black." But Pastoureau is so insightful into the cultural significance of color, and the books are so beautifully designed and illustrated, that I'm inclined to be indulgent, too. As usual, he manages to reveal details from the history of colors that provide new insights into both specific historical periods (like the proliferation of new color names in the so-called Age of Enlightenment, as a proliferation of grays, pinks, and beiges became popular - my favorite is "Paris crap") as well as clarifying certain aspects of art history (the struggle that mid-19th-century artists had with achieving green, because mixing Prussian blue and chrome yellow yielded a fugitive pigment that turned brown over time). Anyone who has read Pastoureau's other works will want to have this continuation. I hope he'll eventually write the book about green's complimentary color, red.

E says

I thought this was really good. Less repetition than in the black volume (red and yellow still to come; then he will supposedly be done). Quite interesting history of painting, such as why certain colors were favored at certain times, and what artists had to do in order to get paints of various colors. Green has a very odd history. Considered bland and boring, it then became a "bad" color but now has a bit of a messianic complex. Pastoureau is again hard on the Reformers for their dislike of color, although at one point he quotes Calvin at length, and Calvin comes off as far more sensible and modern than his Lutheran counterparts.

Would have liked the book even better if Jane Fonda weren't on the cover.

Mills College Library says

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