



Narrative Beginnings: Theories and Practices (Frontiers of Narrative)

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George Eliot wrote that “man cannot do without the make-believe of a beginning.” Beginnings, it turns out, can be quite unusual, complex, and deceptive. The first major volume to focus on this critical but neglected topic, this collection brings together theoretical studies and critical analyses of beginnings in a wide range of narrative works spanning several centuries and genres. The international and interdisciplinary scope of these essays, representing every major theoretical perspective—including feminist, cognitive, postcolonial, postmodern, rhetorical, ethnic, narratological, and hypertext studies—extends from classic literary fiction to nonfictional discourse to popular culture.

The authors, respected scholars and emerging critics, ask what conventions structure our understanding of beginnings before we encounter them; how best to analyze and comprehend beginnings in historical, traditional, and postmodern works; and how endings are (often unexpectedly) related to beginnings. The contributors use historical, political, narratological, and psychological frameworks to pursue these and related questions in works by Laurence Sterne, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Samuel Beckett, Manuel Puig, Salman Rushdie, Julia Alvarez, and feminist hypertext fiction. Together their essays comprise the single most important volume for theorizing about and understanding narrative beginnings.

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