



Anne Tyler: A Critical Companion (Critical Companions to Popular Contemporary Writers)

Paul Bail

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Anne Tyler's novels strike a deep chord of responsiveness in her readers because her novels bring to life contemporary characters to whom we can instantly relate and in whose experiences we can see mirrored our own. Tyler's novels deal with the human experience: relationships between marital partners, between parents and children...between siblings; the meaning of love; the nature of identity; impermanence and change; and loss and continuity. In Anne Tyler novels, life is a complexity whose texture is built out of multiple layers. In this insightful study, Paul Bail shows us how Tyler constructs the complex reality of life through character, narrative point of view, theme, and literary devices. With the exception of Tyler's earliest two novels, which she prefers to forget, a chapter is devoted to each of the other novels she has written. Among the twelve are her unforgettable novels of family relationships and love...loss and renewal, such as *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*, *The Accidental Tourist*, and *Breathing Lessons*. Also included is an analysis of Tyler's most recent novel, *A Patchwork Planet*.

Following a biographical chapter that relates Tyler's life to her work, Bail discusses the novels within the literary tradition of Southern regional literature, women's literature, and popular culture. He also explores the influence of religion on her writing. Each novel is discussed in an individual chapter that includes sections on plot, characters, themes, literary devices, historical setting, and point of view. Bail also offers an alternate critical approach from which to read the novel, such as feminist or multicultural criticism. This study is ideal for students and readers of Anne Tyler and will enrich the reading and appreciation of her novels.

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