



Recommended Reading & Resource List

The Civilizing Process By Norbert Elias

Book Jacket:

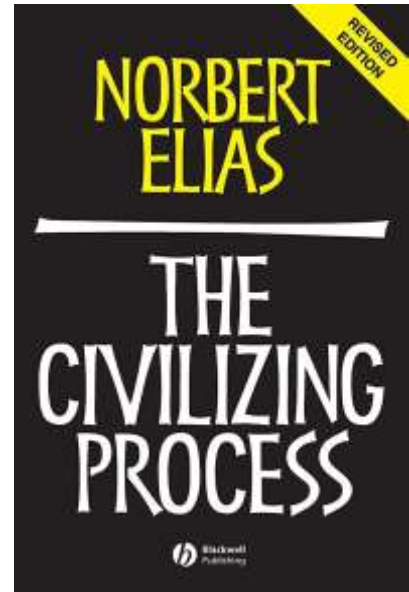
The Civilizing Process stands out as Norbert Elias' greatest work, tracing the "civilizing" of manners and personality in Western Europe since the late Middle Ages by demonstrating how the formation of states and the monopolization of power within them changed Western society forever.

Connection to *God of Carnage*:

Norbert Elias's book *The Civilizing Process* explores the sociological concept of civilization and the development of manners, norms, and social constraints within society. While *God of Carnage* does not explicitly reference Elias's work, there are connections between the themes explored in *The Civilizing Process* and the dynamics depicted in *God of Carnage*, including the fragility of social conventions, behavioral constraints, and the creeping barbarism that exists under the veneer of polite society.

Guiding Questions:

- How does the play explore the tension between societal expectations and the underlying instincts and desires of the characters?
- In what ways does *God of Carnage* highlight the fragility of social conventions and the potential for their breakdown?
- What role does the breakdown in communication play in both works?
- How does power play a role in *God of Carnage*? Do power struggles impact the characters' behavior and interactions?



The Theatre of the Absurd By Martin Esslin

Book Jacket:

In 1953, Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* premiered at a tiny avant-garde theatre in Paris; within five years, it had been translated into more than twenty languages and seen by more than a million spectators. Its startling popularity marked the emergence of a new type of theatre whose proponents—Beckett, Ionesco, Genet, Pinter, and others—shattered dramatic conventions and paid scant attention to psychological realism, while highlighting their characters' inability to understand one another. In 1961, Martin Esslin gave a name to the phenomenon in his groundbreaking study of these playwrights who dramatized the absurdity at the core of the human condition.



Over four decades after its initial publication, Esslin's landmark book has lost none of its freshness. The questions these dramatists raise about the struggle for meaning in a purposeless world are still as incisive and necessary today as they were when Beckett's tramps first waited beneath a dying tree on a lonely country road for a mysterious benefactor who would never show. Authoritative, engaging, and eminently readable, *The Theatre of the Absurd* is nothing short of a classic: vital reading for anyone with an interest in the theatre.

Connection to *God of Carnage*:

While Reza's works may not be considered part of the traditional Theatre of the Absurd movement, they share similarities in terms of themes, techniques, and philosophical underpinnings. Her interest in communication breakdowns, meaninglessness, alienation, and irrational behavior, all framed within in a darkly comic or satirical structure make for resonance with the Absurdist tradition.

Guiding Questions:

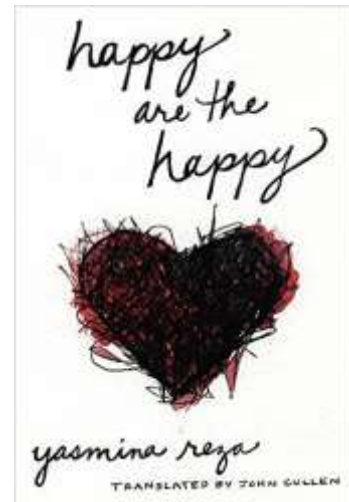
- How does *God of Carnage* use dark humor and satire to critique societal norms and behaviors, akin to the use of humor in Theatre of the Absurd plays?
- In what ways does *God of Carnage* challenge traditional notions of morality and social norms, paralleling the Absurdist tendency to expose contradictions and hypocrisies of societal conventions?
- What role does the breakdown of communication and language play in *God of Carnage*, and how does it parallel linguistic fragmentation and miscommunication often found in Theatre of the Absurd plays?

Happy Are the Happy By Yasmina Reza

Book Jacket:

Happy are the loved ones and the lovers and those who can do without love. Happy are the happy. —Jorge Luis Borges

Schnitzler's *La Ronde* gives these twenty short chapters their shape while Borges's poem gives them their content. As we move from story to story, thrilled to reconnect with an old acquaintance from an earlier scene, we can't help but admit that we are very much at home in this human comedy that understands all too well the passing thoughts, desires, actions, fears, and mistakes that we have and make day after day, but that we would be incapable of rendering with such acuity and compassion.



Connection to *God of Carnage*:

Though obviously different in form, *Happy Are the Happy* provides additional insight into Reza's interest in the hypocrisy of bourgeois values, the complexity of human relationships, and the fragility of social norms.

Guiding Questions:

- What common traits do you see in the characters that inhabit both of Reza's works?
- Reza has said that a theatrical impulse drives all of her work. What would you say is inherently "theatrical" about this novel?
- What advantages does the novel form have in helping Reza to explore the characters and themes that animate her creative works?

Interviews with the Playwright

Though famously private, Yasmina Reza provides great insight into her work when she does speak publicly. Below are two interviews that are especially helpful for unpacking the influences and concerns that animate her work on page, stage, and screen.

The Guardian: “Yasmina Reza: 'There's no point in writing theatre if it's not accessible'”

January 21, 2012

[Read the Article Here](#)

Coinciding with the release of the Roman Polanski film adaptation of *God of Carnage*, in this interview Reza discusses her collaborative process with the polarizing director, adapting the play for film, and her year of documenting the life of former French PM Nicolas Sarkozy.



The Paris Review: “The Fabric of a Life: An Interview with Yasmina Reza”

February 20, 2015

[Read the Article Here](#)

Conducted around the US release of her novel *Happy Are the Happy*, Reza compares herself to a painter and discusses her ability to find the epic within the banal.

