

Binge watching versus reading

# Spoiler. On television series and world literature

MARK CLOOSTERMANS

Since the arrival of HBO and Netflix, television series have become one of the most important mainstream media, with a seemingly effortless appeal to audiences. Doom-mongers point to the growing influence of television as an explanation for the decline in reading. Mark Cloostermans, on the other hand, views television series as artistic works with depth, and sees in them a *unique selling proposition* for literature. After all, they have adopted the novel's complex narrative style and thematic treatment.

## Thought-provoking perspectives and choices

CUTTING EDGE

Many series continue the debate initiated by the great classics of world literature. The seeds of doubt sown by 'Westworld' about the boundaries between fact and fiction go back to the adventures of Don Quixote. 'Breaking Bad' makes Goethe's 'Faust' topical again, 'Game of Thrones' elaborates on the theories of power developed by Tolstoy in 'War and Peace' while 'The West Wing' is a variation on Thomas More's 'Utopia'.

In light-hearted essays leavened with humour, Cloostermans identifies connections between television series and literary classics and analyses what they say about our age and about universal human themes such as identity, meaning and (self-)improvement.

Mark Cloostermans

## SPOILER

Hoe de televisieserie  
een literair genre werd



### AUTHOR



**Mark Cloostermans** (b. 1977) is a fiction and non-fiction writer. His literary detective series "Conscience" takes place in the second half of the 19th century and is partly inspired by the work of legendary Flemish writer Hendrik Conscience (1812-1883). In non-fiction, he has written books on bestselling Flemish author Kristien Hemmerechts, Belgian detective writer Georges Simenon, on Barcelona, and the Flemish publishing industry. Spoiler, in which he looks at US television series through literary glasses, came out in 2017. Between 2002 and 2018 he was a literary critic for De Standaard and a contributor to publications including Ons Erfdeel, Streven and Hollands Maandblad. He lives and works in Barcelona. Photo © Tessa Posthuma de Boer

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