



## Goethe: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions)

By Ritchie Robertson

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In 1878 the Victorian critic Matthew Arnold wrote: 'Goethe is the greatest poet of modern times... because having a very considerable gift for poetry, he was at the same time, in the width, depth, and richness of his criticism of life, by far our greatest modern man.'

In this Very Short Introduction Ritchie Robertson covers the life and work of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832): scientist, administrator, artist, art critic and supreme literary writer in a vast variety of genres. Looking at Goethe's poetry, novels and drama pieces, as well as his travel writing, autobiography, and essays on art and aesthetics, Robertson analyses some of the key themes in his works: love, nature, religion and tragedy. Dispelling the misconception of Goethe as a

sedate Victorian sage, Robertson shows how much of his art was rooted in turbulent personal conflicts, and draws on recent research to present a complete portrait of the scientific work and political activity which accompanied Goethe's writings.

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#### About the Author

**Ritchie Robertson** is Taylor Professor of German in the University of Oxford. He is Research Director for the Modern Languages Faculty, co-director (with Carolin Duttlinger and Katrin Kohl) of the Oxford Kafka Research Centre, convenor of the Bithell Series of Dissertations in German, and editor of the new series *Germanic Literatures* to be published from 2013 by Legenda. He is the author of *The 'Jewish Question' in German Literature, 1749-1939: Emancipation and its Discontents* (OUP, 1999), *Mock-Epic Poetry from Pope to Heine* (OUP, 2009), and *Kafka; A Very Short Introduction* (OUP, 2004). He has translated several German authors into English for the Oxford World's Classics and Penguin Classics series, and has been a Fellow of the British Academy since 2004.

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