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Things to say about a book you've never read

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Abstract

1. There was wonderful symmetry to the plot.
2. I think [insert half-remembered argument from an unrelated review you read in the New York Times].

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Things to say about a book you've never read

by Andrew Blackman

1. There was a wonderful symmetry to the plot.

2. I think [insert half-remembered argument from an unrelated review you read in the New York Times].

3. It was:
 - a. [for thrillers] a real page-turner.

 - b. [for literary fiction] so nuanced.

 - c. [for any kind of printed matter] so powerful.

4. I enjoyed it for a while, but felt it went on too long (if the other person reacts with surprise and says it was only a 120-page novella, nod sagely and say "Exactly.").

5. It was a multi-layered book, wasn't it? I loved the intertextuality, like those allusions to Babylonian mythology that underscore the narrative structure (will make the other person change the subject very quickly).

6. As a matter of fact I haven't read it. I feel comfortable saying this because my ego is secure enough not to be dented by admitting my ignorance even of this famous book that absolutely everyone has read.*

* *Only to be used as a last resort.*

Andrew Blackman is a former *Wall Street Journal* staff writer, now living in Crete and concentrating on fiction. His second novel *A Virtual Love* explores themes of identity in the age of social media, and his short stories and essays have appeared in *Post Road*, *Spark*, *Switchback* and *Monthly Review* among others.

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