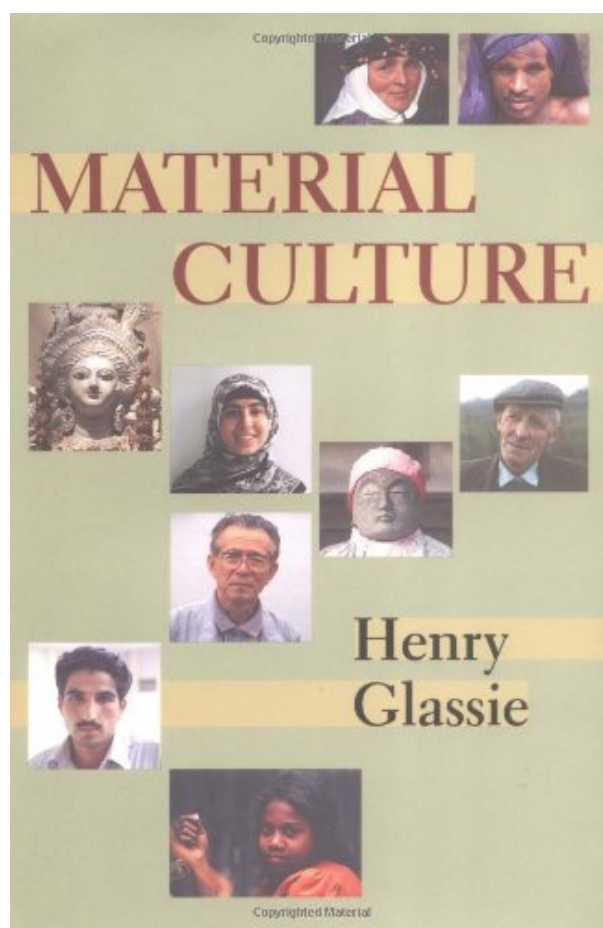
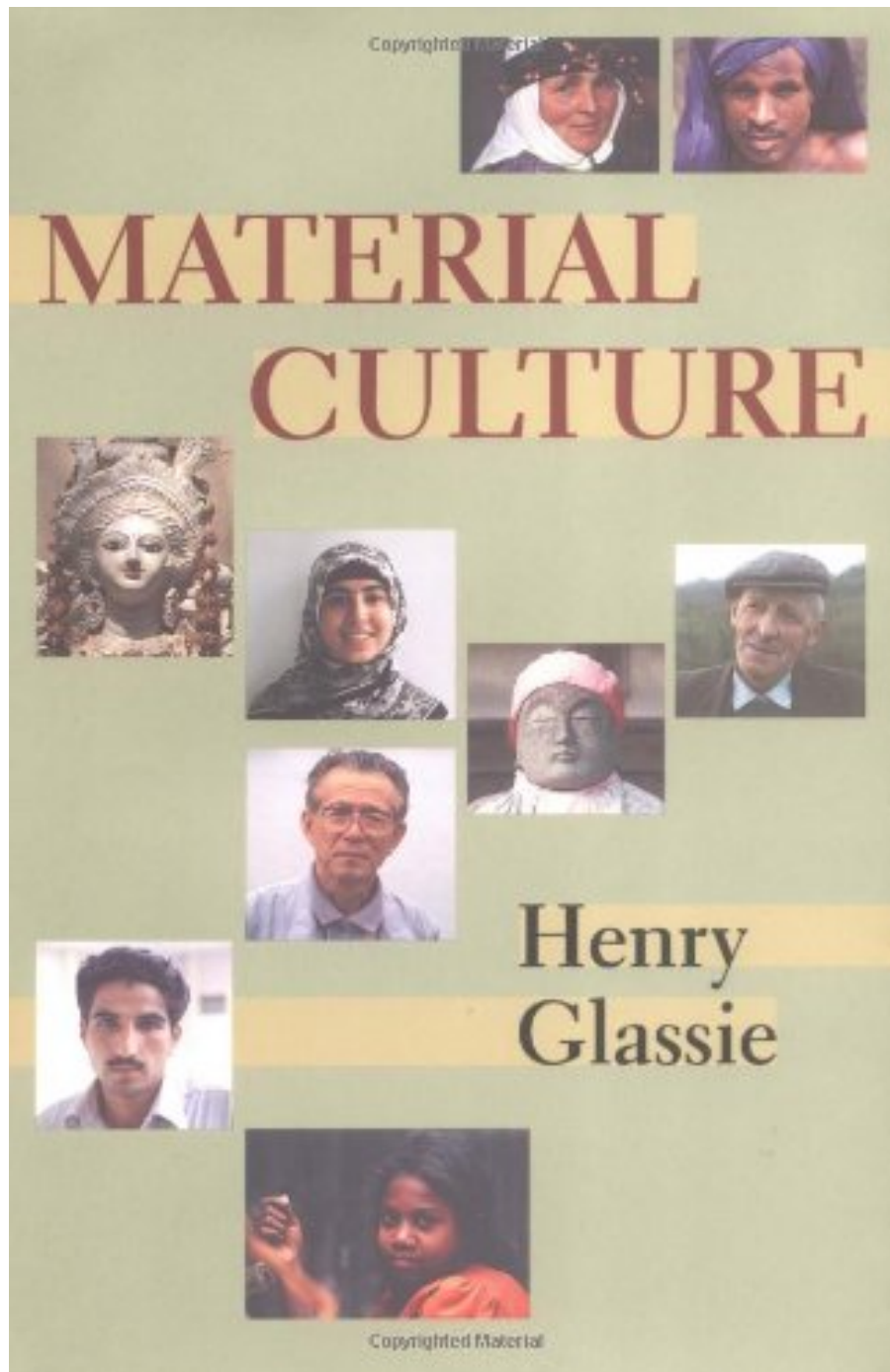


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About the Author

Henry Glassie is College Professor of Folklore and Co-director of Turkish Studies at Indiana University, where he has adjunct appointments in Central Eurasian Studies, Middle Eastern Studies, and American Studies. His books include *Passing the Time in Ballymenone*, *Turkish Traditional Art Today*, and *Art and Life in Bangladesh*, all available from Indiana University Press, as well as several other titles.

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History and art connect in the study of material culture. Material culture records human intrusion in the environment. It is the way we imagine a distinction between nature and culture, and then rebuild nature to our desire, shaping, reshaping, and arranging things during life. We live in material culture, depend upon it, take it for granted, and realise through it our grandest aspirations. Thirty years ago, it seemed that material culture would become the realm within which relativistic and existential thinking would be extended to history and art, the issues of human significance and human excellence. Then the gears locked, the machine stopped, and began to run in reverse. We slid backward, rediscovering the energies of early modernism and naming our effort - in obeisance to the ideology of progress - postmodern. Humanist busied themselves with the reinvention of ideas they could have learned from the old masters of anthropology. Social scientists struggled to contrive ideas they could have learned by reading the great literature of the past. This retrograde motion was caused by more than adjustment to the conservative mood of the age. Moving ahead on independent disciplinary tracks, we had lost touch with one another. "What has changed can change again; the moment at which I write will pass. Groping over old territory, relocating the critical purpose of scholarly endeavour, rediscovering subjectivity and situation, the diversity of orders and the interconnectedness of things, we will find points of convergence that will become the basis for a new transdisciplinary practice, at once humanistic and scientific. Renewed in oneness, we will be able to get on with our work, fashioning a view of humanity fit to the needs of the world's people. "The concept of culture seems a secure achievement. In the future, history and art, as well as science and philosophy, will be understood to be, like culture, the creations of people who are alike in humanity, but different in tradition and predicament. Problematising is easy and endless. New ideas are a dime a dozen. What matters is how ideas fare in the world, what they yield in hard application. Our work will recognise the reality of the individual. It will come to judgement contextually, acknowledging the distinctiveness of traditions that unfold only within human control and among uncontrollable circumstances. It will expand through cross-cultural comparisons that bring us understanding at once of the universal and the particular." - Henry Glassie, from the "Onward".

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The Model for Ethnographic Study of Objects

By A Customer

This book is essential reading for anyone interested in ethnographic description and cultural interpretation. Glassie convincingly argues why the study of material culture challenges the received wisdom of the academy. More importantly, he applies his theory to the practice of completing an incredibly rich and lush reading of folk arts and vernacular architecture. This book provides a rich, interesting, and accessible model for learning to study cultural expressions -- be they Turkish carpets, Japanese ceramics, Appalachian face jugs, Gothic-revival houses, and an array of nifty objects. Glassie is also providing an exciting way to challenge the fragmentation of knowledge and the disconnected view of humankind that has been an unfortunate legacy of postmodernist cultural study.

9 of 10 people found the following review helpful.

Cultural Material

By grasshopper4

Following an intriguing introduction, this book provides useful ways to study material culture. One chapter explains how material culture provides resources for studying history. This idea is key to the study of archaeology, and Glassie demonstrates how to study objects to examine the recent past. There is a vibrant chapter on the role of material culture in the life of a repairer of fine carpets who becomes a carpet seller in Philadelphia. Two of the strongest chapters deal with pottery and vernacular architecture. He provides fascinating insights into art by comparing various pottery traditions as diverse as Appalachian face jugs to Hindu religious art in Bangladesh. The chapter on vernacular architecture is a tour de force that provides an overview of relationships between American history and architecture as well as useful ways to examine the built environment.

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In this ethnographic examination of how material objects function in ...

By Anonymous

In this ethnographic examination of how material objects function in cultural contexts, Glassie argues that the meaning of material culture has been lost to the late 20th century's preoccupation with theory and the critical reformulation of academic paradigms. Glassie advocated for a trans-disciplinary approach, which focuses on interconnectedness rather than disciplinary and theoretical fragmentation, with a returned attention to the ways in which ideas are manifest in materiality.

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