

ENGLISH TEXT SUMMARY NOTES
“The Baghdad Blog”

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SAMPLE

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AREA 1:

READING & THE STUDY OF TEXTS: THE BAGHDAD BLOG

Chapter 1 GENRE

The Baghdad Blog is, as the title suggests, a weblog, which is more commonly known as a blog. A blog is a type of collective journal where individuals use an Internet web-link to post their thoughts in an interactive medium that usually allows others to contribute to the discourse. This can be done either by adding text to the site or making links to it from other sites. The interactive nature of the text postings gives it qualities of spoken conversation, complete with digressions and non-sequiturs, but written for an audience that could extend to hundreds of thousands, if not more. The Baghdad Blog is an almost daily up-dated journal maintained by Salam Pax, focusing on the events in Iraq at the time of the US invasion. The book is a collection of the postings from 7th September 2002 until the 28th June 2003: the collection could have easily started earlier, and they can certainly be added to, which renders the book, like the blog, a work in progress whose completion is not yet in view.

The postings are written for a range of audiences: a wider Western readership who needs Arabic cultural references explained to them; a small coterie of friends and peers; Salam himself. In this way, its genre is only defined by incorporating all its elements: it is a personal diary, it is a phatic discourse amongst friends like a written telephone call, it is a witting historical document being created as witness to the events that are occurring. It is the latter that will make this book endure. The viewpoint expressed in these pages had not been considered by the media at large, and without the blog's presence, a whole perspective on the war would be lost. Therefore, despite its original form, *The Baghdad Blog* is first and foremost a book of reportage that documents this period of Iraqi history to allow it to be meditated upon and re-evaluated in posterity.

Chapter 2

STRUCTURE

The book has the blog entries with the dates in chronological order, more broadly organised into months. There is no formal beginning or ending, and the reader joins the blog knowing that it follows on from a previous blog. In this way, the reader is not provided with an orientation in the traditional way that one expects when reading a book form, and the reader pieces together information from snippets and casual references that are given without explanation. To fully appreciate the content, a reader is expected to be aware of the events surrounding the Iraq invasion, as the writer in his day-to-day deliberations obviously assumes an acquaintance with these things. The dominant voice is that of Salam Pax, but this has been interwoven with fragments that have been posted. There are also excerpts from articles that provide the basis for a critique, which are identified through citing and a change of font.

When dealing with a text which has an unplanned structure, it is possibly futile to give too much importance to the organisation of ideas in a way that is useful in a planned text, but even so, despite the organisation of events being dependant upon the day to day occurrences in Iraq or the predisposition of Salam, it is interesting to observe a discernible pattern of shifting moods and focal points as the writer dwells on the enormity of the situation and has to change pace with some idle flippancy, almost as a defence mechanism against being overwhelmed by the enormity of what is happening around him.

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