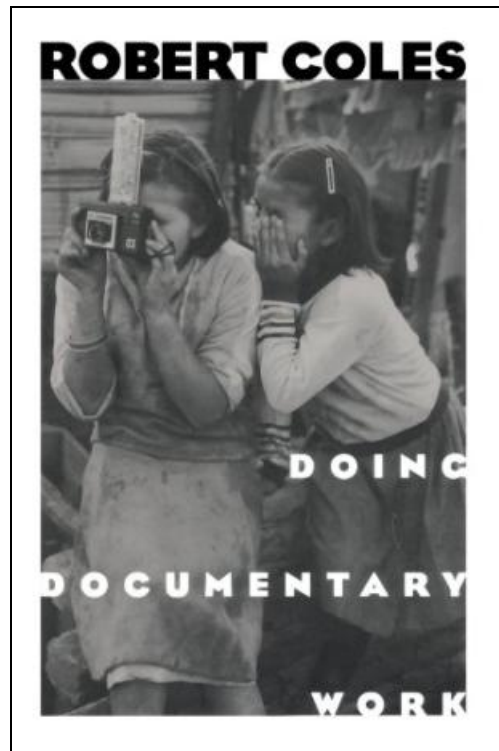


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Oxford University Press. Paperback. Book Condition: New. Paperback. 288 pages. Dimensions: 8.0in. x 5.3in. x 0.6in. Sitting in his study, William Carlos Williams once revealed to Robert Coles what he considered to be his greatest problem in writing a documentary about his patients in New Jersey. When Im there, sitting with those folks, listening and talking, he said to Coles, Im part of that life, and Im near it in my head, too. . . . Back here, sitting near this typewriter--its different. Im a writer. Im a doctor living in Rutherford who is describing a world elsewhere. Williams captured the great difficulty in documentary writing--the gulf that separates the reality of the subject from the point of view of the observer . Now, in this thought-provoking volume, the renowned child psychiatrist Robert Coles, author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning Children in Crisis series, offers a penetrating look into the nature of documentary work. Utilizing the documentaries of writers, photographers, and others, Coles shows how their prose and pictures are influenced by the observers frame of reference: their social and educational background, personal morals, and political beliefs. He discusses literary documentaries: James Agees searching portrait of Depression-era tenant farmers, Let Us Now Praise Famous Men, and George Orwells passionate description of Englands coal-miners, The Road to Wigan Pier. Like many documentarians, Coles argues, Agee and Orwell did not try to be objective, but instead showered unadulterated praise on the noble poor and vituperative contempt on the more privileged classes (including themselves) for exploiting these workers. Documentary photographs could be equally revealing about the observer. Coles analyzes how famous photographers such as Walker Evans and Dorthea Lange edited and cropped their pictures to produce a desired effect. Even the shield of the camera could not hide the presence of the photographer. Coles also...



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