
Brogni, Patrizia, Antonella Filippone, and Alessandra Muzzi. *Raccontare il Novecento*.

Roma: Edizioni Edilingua, 2005. ISBN: 960-6632-16-4.

Raccontare il Novecento is a compact reader designed for students enrolled in high intermediate and advanced Italian language courses. The readings chosen by Brogni, Filippone, and Muzzi are taken from the works of Dino Buzzati, Italo Calvino, Natalia Ginzburg, and Alberto Moravia, who could be considered representative of twentieth-century Italian literature. Buzzati represents the surrealist vein, while Ginzburg and Moravia are considered realists (Moravia's works, however, also exhibit a touch of surrealism, as noted in the excerpts from *Racconti surrealisti e satirici*) and Calvino, though also a realist, represents the "vena fantastica," or fantastic literature, which is also a part of modern Italian literature. The text serves as an excellent introduction to the study of Italian literary language, a component which is often missing from the contemporary approach to language learning. Used alone, or combined with a comprehensive review of advanced grammatical structures, *Raccontare il Novecento* will provide college or university students with a solid preparation for language and literature courses beyond the second-year level.

Written completely in Italian, *Raccontare il Novecento* is divided into sixteen chapters preceded by a brief introduction and ending with a biography of the authors studied. While working with this text, students not only perfect their written and oral language skills, but also refine their reading comprehension and begin to understand what Italian literature is all about and what literary discussion entails. Through the excerpts that make up the body of the text, students are introduced to an excellent sampling of modern Italian literature: Buzzati's *Sessanta racconti*, Calvino's *Palomar* and *Cosmicomiche*, Ginzburg's *Piccoli virtù*, and Moravia's *Racconti surrealisti e satirici*, *Racconti romani*, and *Bob*.

Raccontare il Novecento is meticulously organized. Each chapter begins with a reading selection of about two pages, carefully edited, so that it reads like a story. Words or expressions that the authors, always mindful of the students using this text, have determined to be new or more difficult appear in bold within the reading and are explained (in Italian) in the glossary at the end of each selection. The activities and exercises included in each chapter focus on reading comprehension, understanding elements of style, interpretation of language, and oral and/or written discussion of the themes and ideas prevalent in the particular work studied. Although the activities found under the headings *Attività di comprensione*; *Riflessioni narratologiche*; *Riflessioni linguistiche*, and *Attività di produzione orale e/o scritta* are challenging, they are tailored to each selection so that students not only will have a full understanding of what has been read, but also will

deepen their knowledge of literary style, vocabulary, and more complex grammatical structures. Thus, *Raccontare il Novecento* enables students to refine what has been learned previously and actually bring it to a more advanced level. The questions within each activity are varied and interesting. The *Attività di comprensione* tests comprehension of the text through comparison charts, sequence of events questions, true/false questions, and matching columns, as well as general short-answer questions dealing with the content of the reading. *Riflessioni narrative* asks in-depth questions on narrative style, linguistic strategies, character development, the creation of atmosphere, and the function of descriptive language. *Riflessioni linguistiche* deals with the use of language and grammatical structures. It is through this activity that students gain a constructive review of grammar and learn advanced forms of syntax and sentence structure and perfect their knowledge of word formation. The wide-ranging exercises deal with the use of prepositions, synonyms and antonyms, noun changes using suffixes, idiomatic expressions, forming nouns from adjectives, recognizing infinitives from conjugated verbs, past participles, forming nouns from verbs, the use of the conditional, using the *passato prossimo*, the use of subject pronouns, direct and indirect discourse, reflexive verbs, the subjunctive, and sentence order. The last activities section of each chapter, *Attività di produzione orale e/o scritta*, gives the student the chance to put into practice what has been learned by asking questions about the readings that lead to composition work as well as discussion.

Raccontare il Novecento fills the need for an upper-level text that introduces authentic literary passages and provides a variety of opportunities to review vocabulary in context and analyze sentence structure. Therefore, it is a valuable and effective tool to teach language and culture that will be much appreciated by instructors and students alike.

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