

Book Scan (level 6)

Cees Nooteboom (1980), *Rituals*. (Translated from Dutch by Adrienne Dixon in 1984). San Diego, New York: Harvest.

This work was originally published as *Rituelen*, by Uitgeverij De Arbeiderspers, Amsterdam.

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Cees Nooteboom (b. 1933) debuted in 1955 with the novel *Philip en de anderen* (Philip and the Others) and has since built up an imposing oeuvre of novels, poetry, short stories and travelogues. His work earned him numerous awards, including the Bordewijk Prize, the (American) Pegasus Prize for *Rituelen* (Rituals, 1980) and the Aristeion European Prize for Literature for *Het volgende verhaal* (The Following Story, 1991). In 2004 he was awarded the prestigious P.C. Hooft Prize and in 2009 he won the Prize of Dutch Literature for his entire oeuvre. Both jury reports commented that Cees Nooteboom's prose ranks among the best in the Netherlands in the last fifty years in terms of power of expression, scope and originality. He has frequently been mentioned as a candidate for the Nobel Prize in literature.

General requirements for engaging with the book	Time	145 pages
	Interests	Interest in three rootless men who are searching for the meaning of life through Christian, Eastern and worldly rituals. Also in philosophical themes such as the perception of time, the effect of memory, and historical continuity and discontinuity.
	General knowledge	Historical knowledge of the period 1953-1978: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aftermath of WW II• Korea, Hungary, Berlin, Vietnam• Kennedy, Provo Socio-cultural and anthropological knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none">• decline of wealthy families ('old money'), position of women and the church in the 1950s and 60s• Roman Catholic symbols and rituals• Bible: annunciation, the Passion• philosophical movements: Zen, existentialism, postmodernism• Proust (Madeleine), Plato, Augustine
	Domain-specific knowledge and experience	Experience with postmodern narrative style: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• fragmentary, non-chronological storylines• changes in perspective• intertextuality Experience with literary style: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• irony, metaphors, symbols• unanswered questions, several layers of meaning,• constantly changing sentence and novel structures Experience of interpreting complex texts: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• identifying, linking and interpreting motifs

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> interpreting mottos
<i>Familiarity with literary style</i>	Vocabulary	The text contains many difficult (abstract), infrequent words, as well as quotes from Latin, French, English and German.
	Sentence construction	There are many long, complex sentences containing extended metaphors and alliterative word groups (e.g. 'In that silent room (...) he was apparently connected.' (p.50).
	Stylistics	The style is refined, well-considered and varied. Each character has a characteristic way of speaking. The narrator's distance leads to the frequent use of irony. The following paradox is part of an ironic style: 'The years passed, but even this was noticeable only in photographs.' (p.82-83). There are aphorisms and many kinds of imagery: 'Memory is like a dog that lies down where it pleases.' (p.1). There are also continuous profound, philosophical thoughts that refer to the key themes of time, memory, death, history, etc.
<i>Familiarity with literary procedures</i>	Action	Apart from often cutting dialogues, comic scenes and explicit sex scenes, there is almost no action. The book consists primarily of the narrator's descriptions and elaborations. The action passages are often dialogues frequently interrupted by lengthy reflections by the main characters or by the narrator's philosophical reflections on questions such as time. The narrator sometimes comments on an event or personage.
	Chronology	The structure is not chronological: part 1 (1963), part 2 (1953) and part 3 (1973). This structure ties in with the main character's perception of time: for Inni Wintrop, the present, past and future form an indivisible whole. In part 1 we see him as a thirty-year-old, but this part also contains references by the omniscient narrator to the past, which is not told until part 2, and foreshadowings to the future, which is dealt with in part 3. Important historical events (the Korean War, construction of the Berlin Wall, Kennedy assassination, Vietnam War) give the reader something to go by.
	Story line(s)	Three episodes (1963, 1953, 1973) are interconnected through references forward and back and they sometimes run together.
	Perspective	There is an omniscient narrator, but there is often a switch to a personal narrator. 'Free indirect speech' is sometimes used, obscuring the distance between the omniscient narrator and the main character (e.g. p.59). The narrative present is in 1978.
	Meaning	<p>Title. Novel is interspersed with sacral, ritual actions and ceremonies. All three characters have lost their faith in God and are attempting to create their own meaning in life through rituals. Arnold Taads is rigidly tied to time. 'Time,' Inni learns, 'was the father of all things in Arnold Taads' life'. Philip Taads, on the other hand, attempts to escape time through Zen-like rituals. As for Inni, 'women had become his religion, the centre, the essence of everything, the great cartwheel on which the world turned'.</p> <p>Each episode is preceded by one or two mottos, from Stendhal, Fontane, the canon of the Holy Mass, etc. These mottos usher in a particular character or era.</p> <p>The main themes of the novel are a sense of meaning, loneliness and the main character's (Inni Wintrop's) perception of time. He experiences time in the same way that he recalls his life – as a series of 'unconnected incidents' (p.6). The key motifs are death, decay and the effect of memory (Proust).</p> <p>The ironic style is not confined to formulations, but also concerns events and images, e.g. the host on the tongue, sperm on the tongue ('this is my body') and melting brie on the bishop's tongue.</p>
<i>Familiarity with literary characters</i>	Character	<p>Complex characters whose daily lives, lifestyle, ideas and thoughts will be far removed from those of most adolescents.</p> <p>Inni Wintrop comes from a wealthy family in decline. He deals in shares and writes a daily horoscope for a newspaper. He has a low opinion of himself. When his lover abandons him for an Italian, he attempts suicide. We follow Inni Wintrop as he wanders alone through the streets of Amsterdam, looking for meaning in the 'wonderful, empty universe'. He has several love</p>

		<p>relationships but is faithful to no-one. His aunt believes that he is refusing to suffer. Inni does not participate and never takes sides. As an art lover, he is an 'omnivore', an eclectic.</p> <p>Along the way he has a chance encounter with Arnold Taads and his estranged son, Philip. They are romantic figures who have turned their backs on the world. They suffer from life and are seeking salvation, which they ultimately find in death.</p>
	Number	The number of characters is quite manageable. There is a main character (Inni Wintrop), two secondary characters (Arnold and Philip Taads) and five minor characters (Aunt Thérèse, Zita, Petra, Lyda and Bernard Roozenboom). There is also a small number of very minor characters.
	Relationships	Through his aunt, Inni Wintrop comes into contact with the older Arnold Taads, who becomes a father figure for him. By chance he later encounters, through the art dealer Bernard Roozenboom, Taads's son Philip. These encounters relate to the theme of sense of meaning. No-one manages to establish or sustain a relationship. Inni is isolated in life, and the same can be said of father and son Taads. Arnold and Philip Taads are polar opposites: Arnold Taads lives his life with clockwork regularity, whereas Philip meditates and tries to abolish time. Inni Wintrop's love for women can be set against the spirituality of father and son Taads.
Summary: Didactic potential	<p>Title: discuss the function of rituals for Inni Wintrop, Arnold Taads and his son Philip. What is the meaning of rituals in general and what does this mean for the central theme of the novel?</p> <p>Motto: link the mottos to the relevant chapter and the central themes.</p> <p>Examine the philosophical layer: What is the meaning of life for the three above characters? What role do the Roman Catholic Church and Zen Buddhism play?</p> <p>We see the women in the novel through the eyes of the male characters. How do the three men view women and what role do women play in their lives?</p> <p>Study the motif of time.</p> <p>Study the irony in this novel.</p> <p>Relate this novel to postmodernism.</p> <p>In what respect can this be regarded as a romantic novel?</p>	