



# The Trick of It

"Brilliant . . . *The Trick of It* [is] comic in the obtuse maneuvering of its hero . . . but profound in its grasp of the opposition between the creative spirit and the critical."

—JOHN UPDIKE, *The New Yorker*

A NOVEL

Michael Frayn

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *HEADLONG*

PICADOR USA

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# The Trick of It by Michael Frayn

Michael Frayn

He is aware every thing approximately her earlier than they meet: the make of pen she writes with, her specific height, many of the honorary levels she holds. He understands extra approximately her 9 novels and 27 brief tales than she does herself. Naturally—he has committed his existence to learning and instructing them, and he reveres them. Also, he's 4 instances as shrewdpermanent as she is. The Trick of it's a comedian and painful voyage of exploration into the inventive method and the emotions it arouses in others. the common-or-garden educational disciple reveals himself admitted to his subject's life, and stale to this oldest buddy move a chain of dispatches—by turns The Trick of It awed and patronizing, reverential and jealous, disingenuous and appallingly frank.

An English Lit professor invitations an writer - the writer who's the topic of his scholarship - to return stopover The Trick of It at his classes, to discuss her novels and her writing process. The stumble upon alterations his lifestyles and his career. A one-sided epistolary novel in regards to the artistic method as considered from the outside. i'm wondering if Frayn used to be settling a few rankings during this excruciatingly painful examine literary hangers-on. The narrator writes approximately his anxieties as he anticipates his first assembly with the author: "I do not believe i would like to fulfill her at all. I anticipate my competitors within the box all recognize her personally, yet that is no crisis of mine. i do not be aware of why I name them rivals. that is not how i feel of them. Fellow-specialists. Comrades in arms. I count on my esteemed colleague Vlad the Impaler is usually masterfully sweeping his specimens off on joint family members vacation trips in Tuscany prior to he places them into the killing-bottle and pins them into his collection. and i am yes that creepy little lady from someplace in Pennsylvania who The Trick of It cannot spell heuristic, Dr. Stoff, or Swoff, or no matter what she's called, is over the following each summer time with little jars of home-made arse-salve, weasling her method in to dinner. I continuously inspiration we in Britain have been above such things. Or rather, I by no means inspiration something at all. the belief of attempting to scrape an acquaintance together with her hasn't ever crossed my mind. may perhaps this simply be loss of imagination? Or is a few subconscious resistance at paintings here? And does not the subconscious have its purposes that The Trick of It cause understands not anything of? these types of years of quiet scholarship, and abruptly i am careering off the rails. (Not simply 5 years of TBAD. are you aware i used to be educating TSR and FDDS at that summer season The Trick of It tuition I did The Trick of It in Ontario 11 years ago?) perhaps the sight of her there on the station in all her circumstantiality - I mean, in an x-coloured coat and y-coloured shoes, z inches shorter than me - will spoil the magic. I shake her hand, and think now not the advantage in her flowing into me, however the advantage in me leaking away into her! Flesh! we are not into flesh, in our trade. So then how do I train on, magic-less, to the top of the time period - the top of the yr - the top of my career?" I say z inches shorter than me. z = 5. i have simply regarded in The Trick of It my notes. Oh God, there is going to be not anything yet unhappiness in assembly a person you recognize every little thing approximately already. there is something i do not know? Then i do know the place to appear it up. i do know her brain and that i be aware of her heart, and that i comprehend them backwards, forwards and sideways. i do know what she seems like. i do

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know what she seemed like while she used to be twelve and while she was once seventeen. Seeing her in her x-coloured coat and y-coloured sneakers is simply going to lessen her to a unmarried set of arbitrary particulars."...."I comprehend everything, you see. Well, 'five foot ten and a half' [which he has simply The Trick of It written is the peak of her ex-husband] is a mild liberty, a bit jeu d'esprit. A believable invention. What one may perhaps name taking a leaf out of the opposition's books. simply because that is what those humans do. do you know that? They make issues up. Off the pinnacle in their heads. Pour un oui ou un non. Piff paff. after which sincere operating people like us, in our nice concrete wisdom factories, need The Trick of It to REPORT, need to LEARN, need to KNOW, need to EXPOUND those shrugged-off nothingnesses. Ain't all of it a blooming shame?"I notice now, now that i have stated it - and that i suggest now, among the final paragraph and this - that i'm fascinated about my moment thoughts. yet I suggest heavily serious. I completely don't desire to meet this woman." pp. 6-9

## The Trick Of It

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