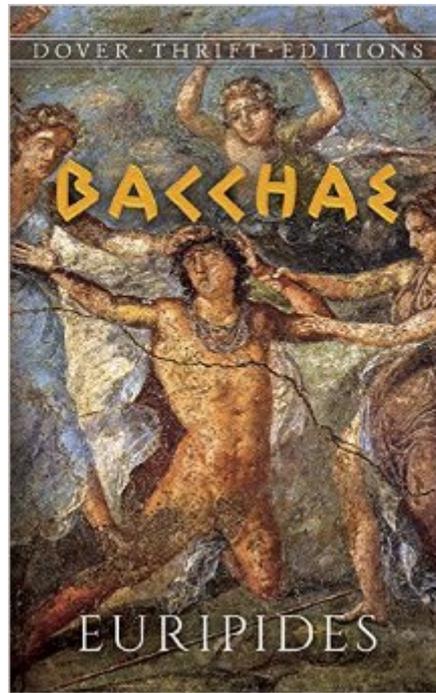


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Bacchae (Dover Thrift Editions)



Synopsis

Classic Greek tragedy concerns the catastrophe that ensues when the King of Thebes imprisons Dionysus and attempts to suppress his cult. Full of striking scenes, frenzied emotion, and choral songs of great power and beauty, the play is a fine example of Euripides' ability to exploit Greek myth to probe human psychology.

Book Information

Series: Dover Thrift Editions

Paperback: 64 pages

Publisher: Dover Publications (April 22, 1997)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 048629580X

ISBN-13: 978-0486295800

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.2 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

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Customer Reviews

If, like me, you had Greek Tragedy down as an austere thing, full of parched plains, unswerving Fate and dour verse, then 'The Bacchae' might come as a pleasant surprise. It has these things of course, but the first quality that shocks is the vibrant, fervid excess of the language. The story concerns Dionysus, the God of wine, the Life Force, the Chaos of the Irrational etc., who inspires a possessed devotion in his acolytes, as they express themselves in high-flown, ecstatic rhapsodies. Not every one takes this proto-hippie's divinity seriously, in particular the family of his mortal mother, led by the impetuous teenage king Pentheus, who sees all this Bacchanalia in the woods and mountains in loose robes as so much lechery. Dionysus exacts such terrible revenge on these unbelievers that 'Bacchae' makes Shakespeare's 'Titus Andronicus' look like a Julie Andrews vehicle. If Sophocles' 'Oedipus the King' is the first detective story, than 'Bacchae' might be the first police procedural - a central sequence sees Pentheus arrest Dionysus and interrogate him, a scene as tightly written and suspenseful as any thriller. But detection and policing, embodying the forces of

reason and the Law, have no power against the Irrational or Unknowable, and Pentheus is soon made mad, his order and sense of self in tatters. The terrible grip of irony familiar from Greek Tragedy gives the play a violent momentum, but the most extraordinary scenes take place offstage, related in vivid and tumultuous monologues by messengers - the whirlwind revenge of Dionysus' female followers on the forces of surveilling civilisation, and the cruel enactment of the God's revenge. This idea of hearing about improbable catastrophes but not being able to see them adds to the supernatural terror that is the play's fevered life-blood.

Class requirement book I needed to read.>>>>Warning harsh language/content/cursing in book

Great drama. I'm not a huge "classics" fan and yet I enjoyed this. If you're into Greek mythology and like flowery language and prose (and lots of melodrama) you will enjoy this. HINT: don't read these plays line-by-line like a poem - I find that it's more difficult to follow them that way. Read this like you would a novel.

I teach AP English Lit, and I like to find inexpensive editions of novels and plays for my students to purchase. This Dover Thrift edition is horrible because it uses a very old translation. When I read the description on Amazon, the publication date was given as 1997, and the translation was called "fresh." Once I started reading the play, I saw that the translation was not "fresh" at all. It uses Latin word order all the time, which is fine for me because I also teach Latin and I am used to the direct object coming before the verb and subject (which happens in Shakespeare quite often also). However, I knew that my AP English students would become very confused and frustrated right away and would stop reading the play. When you look at the copyright info in this edition, you see that it was first published in 1997, but it is based on a 1908 edition which follows a translation that was first published in 1865. That is not my idea of a "fresh" translation. The play is wonderful and students enjoy it when they can read it without frustration. I don't want a dummed down translation, but I do want a translation that is accessible for 21st century students.

Dionysos returns to the city of his birth, anxious for those honors which are due him. Pentheus, current ruler of Thebes and a cousin of our hero, doesn't accept him. Pentheus finds out he made a really bad mistake, when he ends up at the top of a pine tree! What more could you ask for? Euripides' masterpiece is as great as ever, and for the price it can't be beat. Highest rating!

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