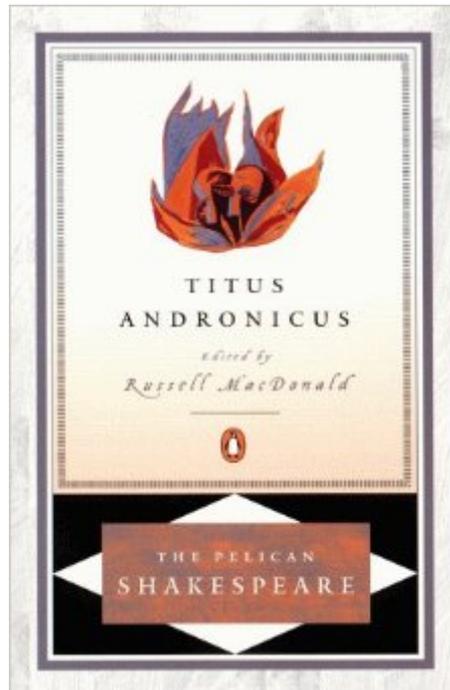


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Titus Andronicus (The Pelican Shakespeare)



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Customer Reviews

This play by Shakespeare is a founding play in his career. He will never accumulate that much physical cruelty in another play, preferring psychological or mental cruelty to such gross and even sickening horror. One element has to be emphasized. The role of the "pairs of brothers" in this play.

Titus Andronicus has a brother Marcus Andronicus who plays a major role in the plot. Titus Andronicus had twenty-five sons and only four (presented as two pairs: Martius-Mutis and Lucius-Quintus) come back from war alive accompanying one dead brother to represent the twenty-one who died. Tamora, the Queen of the Goths, is Titus's prisoner and she has three sons: Alarbus, Chiron and Demetrius. The late Emperor had two sons, and the two brothers are crucial since they want to succeed their father. They are Saturninus and Bassianus. The play starts with the decision of Titus Andronicus to have Tamora's eldest son, Alarbus, sacrificed to pacify the spirits of his dead sons. Alarbus is then, off stage, dismembered alive and then disemboweled alive and the arms and legs, then the entrails are burned on a sacrificial pyre before the still not completely dead body of Alarbus is burned hence still alive, as a full report tells us. We can note it is close to what happened to William Wallace. This reduces the triplet to a simple pair of brothers. Titus Andronicus chooses Saturninus to succeed his father and Saturninus then announces he chooses Lavinia, Titus's daughter, as his future wife. Titus then offers Tamora and her two remaining sons to Saturninus who decides to make Tamora his mistress, maybe more, with Lavinia's agreement. Bassianus then declares Lavinia his betrothed and seizes her with the agreement of her brothers but against Titus's own decision to return her to Saturninus.

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