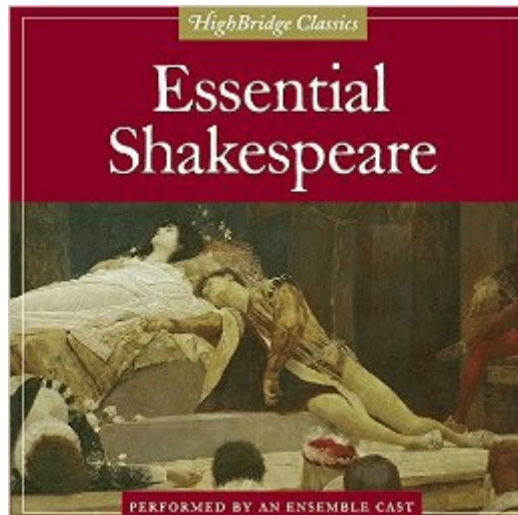


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Essential Shakespeare (Highbridge Classics)



Synopsis

Experience some of the most thrilling poetry and drama in world literature. This unique collection includes two sonnets and famous scenes from 11 of Shakespeare's plays: Macbeth, Othello, Twelfth Night, As You Like It, Romeo and Juliet, Much Ado About Nothing, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Richard II, Henry V, Cymbeline, and The Merry Wives of Windsor. Each scene is performed by well-known actors; each is prefaced with an introduction that highlights the main themes of the play, summarizes the plot, and describes the scene you are about to hear.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As a 3rd Year English Student, I highly recommend this collection. While I already own the Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works, this book I find offers a unique way of reading Shakespeare. Ted Hughes offers a brilliant introduction in which he relates how Shakespeare can be read on two very unique levels. Plays in their entirety, and the way that this book offers selections, excerpted speeches and soliloquies. Taken out of context, the various collected tid-bits stand on their own and allow the reader to absorb the text and poetry without being constrained by characterization and plot development, a more abstract quality is given to the works and the texts stand by themselves in a distinct way. Worth picking up, cheers.

I bought this set of two audio CDs on a lark so I could qualify for free shipping on another item. It has turned out to be the most entertaining audio purchase I made last year. I have a 10-minute drive

to work, and I listen to it every day while driving. The scenes are so well acted, the narration so illuminating, the music so appropriate, the audio so clear, and the drama so vivid -- it's no less than Shakespeare at his best -- that you simply cannot listen to it just once. I have easily listened to every scene more than 15 times, and I find something new and priceless every time I repeat the cycle. If you don't have access to live productions of Shakespeare's plays and you're like me and find his works somewhat daunting to read, this audio product is the perfect solution. The actors are consummate pros. My only complaint is that the CD insert gives credit to only four actors. I'm quite sure that I heard more than four, one of whom is surely the narrator, Mary Denham. Anyway, all of the performers shine, as does this product.

The book is arranged more or less chronologically with passages from the plays juxtaposed with sonnets until the time at which he. Shakespeare, stopped writing sonnets. There seem to be little currents of thematic connection running through the ordering of selections, which is sometimes intriguing. Hughes decided for no particularly good reason to identify the passages and numbers of the sonnets in an appendix at the end of the book instead of having the titles (and sonnet numbers) atop each passage. The idea was to remove the speeches from their context in the plays so they could sing alone, but this has an odd effect. The speeches in the plays aren't really poems that exist independently the way the sonnets do or the way any other poem, good or bad, does. They are magnificent and the context isn't the most important aspect but it's certainly relevant. They are all expressions by particular characters in "situations", so the nature of the distress and type of character are important. Out of context, they don't always have much validity, they're not universal, self-evident truths. Lady Macbeth's quotes are chilling and magnificent but relate to the experience of wanting to murder or having murdered an important person who's sleeping over, not life in general. So I wish he'd let us know what play and who the speaker was right there on the same page. Having said that, this is an excellent selection and a useful thing to have. No one has expressed the real goings on of the psyche with so much clarity and affection as Shakespeare.

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