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Billy Budd (American Collection)



Synopsis

Students with lower reading abilities can enjoy some of the most important literature of our culture. This seventy-two book collection features easy-reading texts with extensive artwork on every page to capture students' attention. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Book Information

Series: American Collection

Audio CD

Publisher: Assembled Stories (January 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1860150152

ISBN-13: 978-1860150159

Product Dimensions: 5.6 x 4.9 x 0.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 5.6 ounces

Average Customer Review: 3.8 out of 5 stars See all reviews (127 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #5,713,996 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #18 in Books > Books on CD > Authors, A-Z > (M) > Melville, Herman #2015 in Books > Books on CD > Literature & Fiction > Classics #24962 in Books > Books on CD > Literature & Fiction > General

Customer Reviews

Authors really have a hard time avoiding the fact their stories nearly always mirror their most closely guarded personal concerns. But the writers who care deepest about the messages they're sending are usually the hardest hit. "Billy Budd, Sailor, and Other Stories"--a Penguin Classic pairing of both well-known and comparatively obscure short stories by America's ultimate "writer's writer"--details the immense artistry, messianic eccentricity and wounded vanity of a deeply troubled man who toiled--unsung, ridiculed--long before his time ever could have come. This particular collection, refracted as it is by a heartfelt introduction by contemporary American author Frederick Busch, highlights both author and character in alienated reserve in the well-known "Bartleby, Scrivener"; exhibits the writer's knowing infatuation with the great satires of Swift and allegories of Milton in "The Paradise of Bachelors and Tartarus of Maids" and "The Encantadas"; his obsession with the interplay of virtue and pragmatism in "Billy Budd, Sailor"; and reveals even prophetic intonations in a story about race, "Benito Cereno." Some seem little more than amusing studies, but even the least in this collection testifies to Melville's eternal ability to astonish and take your breath clean out of your body. Indeed, Melville's shorter work reveals just how far he was from the day's critical

appraisal of him as an unsuccessful writer of mere adventures that simply didn't fit the bill.

Reading, be the target novels, short stories, poems, or road maps, demands an investment from readers of a certain number of hours from their life spans. Perhaps I am too demanding, but I feel that, if I am to trade a portion of my life for the message left for me by an author, the message should be meaningful, and I should lay down the completed book feeling that I have gained something positive from having read it: a new insight, a new word added to my recognition vocabulary, or a new vicarious experience. I also detest having my attention diverted from the author's message by having to stumble around malapropisms, misspellings, or nonstandard punctuation. This collection of short stories (and I have no objection if one wishes to characterize "Billy Budd" as a novella) does not disappoint. From these eight stories I have gleaned new vocabulary and new vicarious experiences, and in none of them is the writing any less than superb. This is not to claim that the writing is always easily read. The acceptable and educated writing style of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was far more periphrastic than is today's streamlined and, at times, abbreviated and almost staccato style. Simple sentences were not preferred over compound-complex sentences. Writers were not hesitant to select words that best fit their purpose, the number of syllables and the antiquity of a word notwithstanding. We tend to see such writing today as "dense, impenetrable and boring," but just think of the opportunity to expand one's vocabulary and to practice concentrating on the meaning being conveyed by those wonderfully detailed sentences!

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