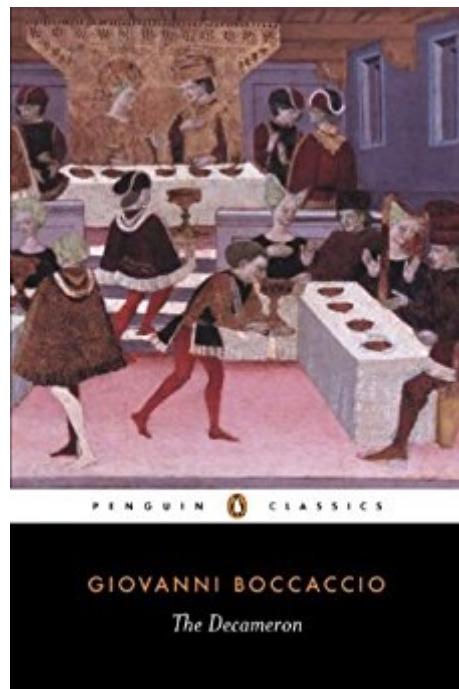


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The Decameron (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

In the summer of 1348, as the Black Death ravages their city, ten young Florentines take refuge in the countryside. They amuse themselves by each telling a story a day for the ten days they are destined to remain there - a hundred stories of love, adventure and surprising twists of fate. Less preoccupied with abstract concepts of morality or religion than earthly values, the tales range from the bawdy Peronella hiding her lover in a tub to Ser Cepperallo, who, despite his unholy effrontery, becomes a Saint. The result is a towering monument of European literature and a masterpiece of imaginative narrative.

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Short Stories

Customer Reviews

Giovanni Boccaccio is one of the three supreme literary masters of the Italian Renaissance--sharing those laurels with Dante and Petrarch--and he is also the most accessible. Written in the 1350s, in the wake of the worst part of the Black Plague (which would kill off one-third of Europe's population), THE DECAMERON is a collection of one hundred surprisingly light, hilariously funny and frequently bawdy short stories. In his preface, Boccaccio claims to have intended them to entertain Italian

women who spent most of their lives indoors. Seven young Florentine ladies and three young gentlemen sojourn together to a Tuscan villa to escape the contagion-filled city. They pass each of their ten days in the picturesque countryside with long walks, good food and wine, jovial games, and oh yes, telling stories. Each of them is crowned queen or king for a day and gets to choose the order of the telling. This framework combined with the beautifully described rural setting makes the reader, too, feel warm, welcome, and one of the party. Boccaccio indulges in a popular form of satire against the foul and corrupt members of the fourteenth century clergy--one of the ten actually admits that it's "too easy" to pick on such scoundrels. With humor and the power of shame he attacks both the hypocrisy of the clergy and the hypocrisy toward which the Catholic Church's sexually repressive laws drove people. Here we find a group of nuns fighting over the sexual favors of the convent gardener; there a wily cleric indulges his prurient urges by convincing a foolish woman that he is the Angel Gabriel; still another adulteress cows her angry husband by claiming he is not enough to satisfy her lust--is it fair that she throw the surplus to the dogs?

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