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Gilgamesh: A New Rendering In English Verse



Synopsis

A new verse rendering of the great epic of ancient Mesopotamia, one of the oldest works in Western Literature. Ferry makes Gilgamesh available in the kind of energetic and readable translation that Robert Fitzgerald and Richard Lattimore have provided for.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is one of the more recent translations of the Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh, about the hero-king of ancient Mesopotamia whose adventures--searching for eternal life, surviving a worldwide deluge in an ark filled with animals, to name a couple--make up one of oldest pieces of literature on record. David Ferry's version attempts to provide the most readable rendering of the epic, artfully finding a poetic voice that's particularly accessible to the modern ear, as well as working to smooth over the gaps in the poem caused by the fragmentary record of the original clay tablets. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Ferry's (*On the Way to the Island*) version of this Mesopotamian epic is not simply a translation but an artful interpretation which aims to convey the spirit rather than the letter of the fragmentary original. Working from scholarly translations of the Sumerian and Akkadian tablets but departing from them freely, he has produced a "rendering" with shape and wholeness. And Ferry has enhanced the closeness of the relationship between Gilgamesh and Enkidu, the wild man created by the gods to temper the hero's fierceness. Early in the poem, Gilgamesh sagely tells Enkidu, "The

life of man is short. / What he accomplishes is but the wind." After Enkidu's death, Gilgamesh is driven to seek the secret of eternal life from Utnapishtim, who was granted eternal life. Gilgamesh learns bitterly the truth of his own words in the beautiful but unconsoling speech of the wise man: "Time after time the river has risen and flooded. / The insect leaves the cocoon to live but a minute." Ferry's iambic pentameter is more lyrical than epic, and captures the elegiac and ironic undertones of Gilgamesh's failed search for immortality. One senses that he has restored the poetry of this oldest epic. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This English verse translation of Gilgamesh, by David Ferry, is not taken literally, but is translated so as to make sense to English readers. Hence it is easy to read for any good readers. The book tells the story of Gilgamesh, the stormy-hearted ruler of the city-state of Uruk. At the request of the people oppressed by him, Gilgamesh is given a companion, Enkidu. The two become inseparable, and have many adventures together. First they slay the Dragon Huwawa of the Cedar Forest, and make a great gate for their city. Then they kill the Bull of Heaven. This angers a Goddess Ishtar, who convinces the Gods that Enkidu must die. After Enkidu's death, Gilgamesh becomes distraught, and dreads the fact that one day, he too will have to face the same end that Enkidu did. Attempting to avoid his fate, he starts on a nearly impossible mission to meet Utnapishtim, the only immortal man, in hopes that he too might gain immortality. He is unsuccessful at getting eternal life, however so he returns home. One day he is able to talk with the spirit of Enkidu from the Netherworld, and learns that those who have many to mourn for them live the most comfortably in the Nether. The book contains 92 pages of well-spaced lines of easily understandable prose, as well as an introduction at the beginning and some notes at the end. Any fluent reader will have no problem reading this book and it is very exciting and suspenseful. A tale from ancient civilizations, it contains similarities to the story of Noah and the flood from the Bible, with Utnapishtim being the "Noah" character. It is a must read for anyone who enjoys ancient stories, and a good read even for those who don't.

This is one of the best stories I have ever read! If you want a complete Gilgamesh this is a good "translation" (he did not actually translate it) however if you want a scholarly edition don't bother with this. This is a grand story of friendship and mortality. Gilgamesh is a sort of anti-hero who is described as great and terrible in the same sentence. For being 5 thousand years old there is a surprising amount of color and emotion.

I've read two translations of Gilgamesh over the years (Dalley's in Myths from Mesopotamia, and the prose version published by Penguin classics). I enjoyed them but Ferry has given us a beautiful poetic version that, although faithful to the translations, is liberated enough from them for the artistic spirit to soar, thus giving us the heart and beauty of this timeless story.

I read this version of Gilgamesh with my senior Resource Room students. This went very quickly and smoothly; the students were engaged and had fantastic discussions throughout our class readings. I recommend this translation for any other teachers who are interested in reading Gilgamesh for their classes.

Do not buy this. It is not a translation of the ancient epic, but a modern retelling of it that deviates freely from the original. I was very disappointed and feel misled.

I had to read the original "Epic of Gilgamesh" in First year English at University. I only recall trying to stay awake while reading for a content test the next day! This writing puts the ancient's scripts within the grasp of the ordinary reader who likes to divert from the usual literary trail. I found the characters of Enkidu and Gilgamesh enchanting. There is great social substance in this story. For the port, house library, discussion types!

This version is more updated, and I appreciate it. In past years, I have had my students read it before beginning the Aeneid. Not sure how I'll do it this year.

Had to get for school but it was very interesting. I enjoy history.

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