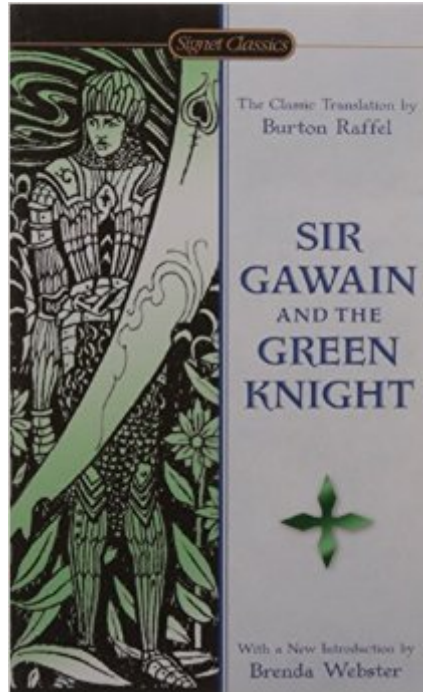


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Sir Gawain And The Green Knight (Signet Classics)



Synopsis

The epic poem of honor and bravery *Written by an anonymous fourteenth-century poet, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is recognized as an equal to Chaucer's masterworks and to the great Old English poems, *Beowulf* included. A green-skinned knight offers the Knights of the Round Table a simple but deadly challenge—a challenge taken on by the brave Sir Gawain. A challenge that will force him to choose between his honor and his life...

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The story of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is perhaps the most authentically English of all the King Arthur tales. Most of the Arthurian mythos was largely a largely French creation, when the Norman conquerors discovered a few old Celtic legends about Arthur and wove them into a dynamic myth of chivalric idealism. The story of Sir Gawain is regarded by most scholars as a much purer version of those Celtic stories, as well as a much more nuanced synthesis of Celtic cultural heritage with Christian ideals. J.R.R. Tolkien was fond of citing it as one of his very favorite stories and deepest influences. Raffel's translation is sure to endear itself to any fan of fantasy, medieval literature, or the King Arthur stories. It flows with the simple beauty of a dream, and the purity of heart of Gawain himself. Do yourself a favor and spend an hour or two reading this.

This 14th Century poem is one of the earliest known works in English. Its provenance is a mystery because literally nothing is known of the poet. It is written in a unique dialect of Middle English and

is pretty much unread in the original. This verse translation by Burton Raffel is terrific and does much to elevate the work to the level of Beowulf & Chaucer. At Christmas time, a Green Knight enters Camelot and challenges any Knight of the Roundtable to smite him with one blow of a battle axe. The only catch is that one year hence the smiter must receive a similar blow from the Green Knight. Sir Gawain volunteers for this strange duty. He beheads the Green Knight who thereupon picks up his laughing head and reminds Gawain of his obligation & tells him to find him in exactly one year to receive the blow. The enchanting adventure leading up to and including their subsequent confrontation is beautifully rendered by Raffel. The poem is exciting, humorous & deals with great themes: courage, honor, etc. GRADE: A+

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight tells a very old tale that you don't necessarily have to be a literary buff to appreciate. The story is fun, fairly to the point (considering the time that it was written in) and is a pretty fast read. Lots of moral lessons and truths are displayed through Gawain and the other characters in the novel and most readers will find themselves pleased with the outcome. It gets a solid SHOULD read from me, not a MUST or a DON'T. You definitely "SHOULD" read this book if you're looking to get into classical or epic literature. If not it's still a good "SHOULD" read.

This was one of our books for Brit Lit and I'm so glad I was introduced to it. Sir Gawain is an interesting character that really adds to the King Arthur universe. It was originally written in Middle English so modern readers are reading it in translation but this is a particularly good one. It's very understandable and easy to read. The dialect it was written in originally did not become the standard English dialect so I imagine only scholars read it in the original language. Sir Gawain is at King Arthur's Christmas festivities when the Green Knight enters the building and proposes a game. He'll trade axe blow for axe blow with any knight in the room. When none volunteer and it appears that King Arthur himself will have to take up the challenge, Sir Gawain, the most celebrated knight in the court, jumps in to do it. If you don't know what happens when they play their little game, you've missed a fun story and I won't spoil it for you. The rest of the book is Sir Gawain's quest to find the Green Knight again and all his adventures. It's great stuff! Sir Gawain and the Green Knight has a lot to say about the chivalric code, heroism, bravery and integrity. In the end, we find out who was behind the whole game (Arthur's evil half-sister Morgana la Faye) and Sir Gawain learns that he might not be everything he thinks he is. We end up with a humbled and chastened Sir Gawain who is proving the author's point about thinking more highly of yourself than you ought. Lovers of Arthurian legends probably shouldn't miss this. You can also see the beginnings of all the

sword-play type fantasies that are being written. It's just a fun and clever piece of classic English writing. Don't let the fact that it came from the 14th century scare you off. You won't have any trouble with this translation.

I was required to read this book in college ... and I loved it. A tale of courage, the knights code of moral and adventure, this book is not only an adventure story but a depiction of the human condition. Selfishness and fear can ruin our moral constitutions. The knight was a tower strength and courage yet the book brought to focus his fears and his selfishness. I'm sure there are deeper levels of analysis for this book - good books often do.- johnny -

I can't comment on Raffel's faithfulness to the original. But if this were his invention rather than a translation it would be amazing. Raffel's translation style flows so easily yet preserves so much heightened diction and beautiful figures of language. He is to Old English what Robert Fagles was for Homer! The story itself was also amazing. It tells the story of Sir Gawain facing a mythical green knight. Most of the story he thinks he will die, but the end is a wild surprise. I especially love the castle stay where his lazy, in-bed days are contrasted with the boar and fox hunts. The fox being chased by the hunting-hounds to death definitely evokes what Gawain is facing soon as well. I love the part what David (from the Hebrew Bible) is referred to as a knight - funny lack of historical perspective. All in all a great story. I read it in one day. Loved the religious overtones as well.

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