



Volpone and Other Plays

Ben Jonson, Michael Jamieson (Editor)

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The three plays collected in this volume depict the faults, errors and foibles of ordinary people with exuberant humour, savage satire and acute observations. Volpone portrays a rich Venetian who pretends to be dying so that his despised acquaintances will flock to his bedside with extravagant gifts in hope of an inheritance. The Alchemist also deals with greed and gullibility, as a rascally trio of confidence tricksters, claiming to have the legendary Philosopher's Stone, fool a series of victims who are hoping to make some easy money. And in a wonderfully energetic portrait of Jacobean life, Bartholomew Fair shows a diverse group of Londoners sampling the delights and temptations of the Fair - and the traders, prostitutes and cutpurses who set out to exploit them.

Volpone and Other Plays Details

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Becky says

I'm positive I read Volpone, but I don't remember what other ones I read. Took a course in 16th Brit Lit and this was part of required reading.

Shadday says

There is little point in me pretending to pour laborious, deliberate over these works, when all work by Ben Jonson is considered with dedicated, lifetime respect and admiration. The Alchemist's 'To the Reader' packs more of a genius, baroque punch, than 2014's combined publications in the New York Times, L Magazine, Moo-Cow House, New York Review of Books, The Guardian, and another 475,000 combined tumblrs, blogs, what have you. Jonson is the stuff of desert island genius: His detractors amount to the kind of mentally retarded seals who stand around smoke machines clapping for their auditory idols, contemplating another shitty tattoo, signing up for another Shakespeare-related club. Fuck it, Ben Jonson or bust. Both. Now someone fetch me my black cape, my magnum of chilled wine, or get the hell away from me.

Donna says

I studied this play to death at University - I'm so bored of it I doubt I'll ever read it again!

Eva says

Ben Jonson is the God of Satire!

Andrew says

As absurd as it is insightful, VOLPONE moves at a brisk pace even when nothing in particular is happening. The first time I read it, I had trouble juggling the numerous characters. But eventually each takes a distinct voice: Voltore ("the Vulture) in his purposely ambiguous legalese and Corvino whose every word hangs on anxiety over his wife's unfaithfulness. VOLPONE is really the tale of Mosca, the brilliant parasite who works everyone behind the scenes; in his seemingly minor position, Mosca rises to power by figuring out to how to manipulate the jealousies and ambitions of everyone involved.

VOLPONE is about masks, class, sirs and madams, those who embrace philosophy without knowing what it means, and the way humans morph into animals when money is involved. A wonderful play.

Kris says

I only read Volpone, as that was my assignment.

Gen. Ray says

Will review later

Adam Floridia says

Summary of Volpone: What a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive.

Moderately entertaining. I liked the fable-esque nature.

Tiffany says

I actually read an online version of this text provided by my teacher as part of my Introduction to Drama course, so this is not the same version I'm writing about, but is the same work (speaking specifically of Volpone). The version we read for class didn't have any notes or anything, which proved to be necessary for me to really feel that I understood it. But, fortunately, these are easy to find online if necessary. In terms of the show itself, there is certainly a great deal to be amused by here, and it is also a good example of Renaissance comedy. As someone that has always been interested in drama, I certainly considered this one to be well worth reading.

Sean says

I'm not surprised that this is still Jonson's most-read/-performed play; the wit and conflict have aged well. It feels like he's doing something very clever with genre distinctions (e.g. the elements of this comedy bear eerie resemblance to the tragedy of Othello, and Volpone was first performed in the Globe, by Shakespeare's company, shortly after they had put on Othello, so those similarities would have been in the minds of the original audience, too.
