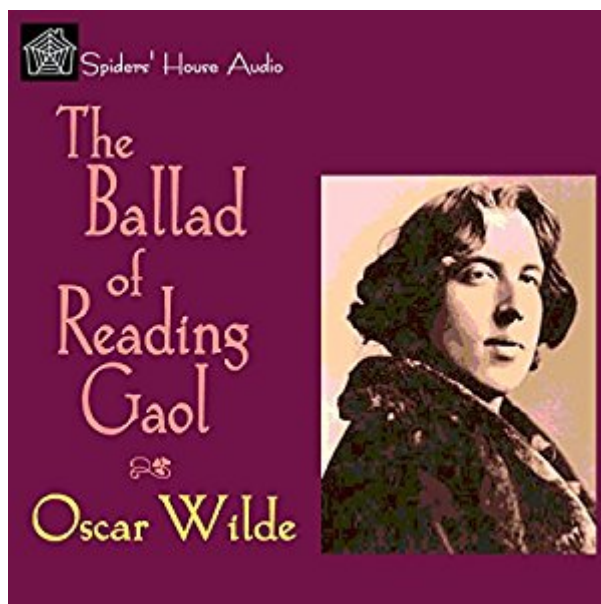


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The Ballad Of Reading Gaol



Synopsis

"The Ballad of Reading Gaol" was written by Oscar Wilde in France, where he was in exile after his release from Reading Gaol. Wilde had been imprisoned and sentenced to two years hard labor. A hanging took place while Wilde was incarcerated, and the poem is the narrative of the execution.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Essential for any lover of great poetry, and certainly for any fan of Oscar Wilde is his great poem, "The Ballad of Reading Gaol." Scarcely the only thing he wrote after his return from his notorious 2-year prison term, The Ballad of Reading Gaol is a moving and tragic account of one man's suffering. One could go on and on - writing hundreds of pages in essay form - about the indignities and injustices of prison life, but this goes toward saying it much better than any ivory tower intellectual argument ever could. Wilde, winner of the infamous Newdigate Prize For Poetry at Oxford University, had long been an immaculate poet - an a born writer - but he practically abandoned the form after his marriage and the start of his career as a playwright in the early 1890's (aside from that strange amalgam of a poem, The Sphinx.) And yet, this is almost exclusively the only thing Wilde wrote after his release before his untimely death in 1900. Thankfully, the great artist went out with a bang. The Ballad fuses some of the best and clearest writing I have ever read in the English language with a poetic sensibility and a true and tragic sense of real suffering, thereby creating one of the great poems of all-time. Many anthologies of Wilde's writings are available, and perhaps buying a book that simply includes this lone poem is questionable. I definitely suggest that you go for a Complete Works if you are new to the author; however, if you'd like a travel-worthy copy of certain smaller works - such as this poem - then editions such as this will serve you well.

Besides, this edition has as well those beautiful paintings to go along with it - something I'm sure Oscar himself would've loved.

The Ballad of Reading Gaol is truly a fascinating poem. Wilde's valorization of the tragic murderer, "...each man kills the thing he loves... the kindest use a knife because the dead so soon grow cold", provides a poignant commentary on the transience of love. However, this book is marred by what seem to be terrible typos: "But their were those amongst us all..." "And knew that, had each go his due..." "Mad mourners of a corse!" I haven't read any of the other versions of this poem, and can't tell you if they're better, but for the extra money this costs, I expected more from the publisher. Five stars for the poem, but only one for the presentation because of its errors.

This is a classic. It is free. It was written by an acknowledged master. How very late-20th Century egocentrism to be asked to RATE something which has been a dip-and-taste book for decades. I'm a writer, I loved it. I don't give a damn about sexual proclivity, but you may turn up your nose because of the author, no matter the literary merit. I did not treat it as a page-turner, you should not either.

I am biased, I love Wilde-- he can be a touch over the top (:D), but he's never dull. This is a long poem... or series of poems etched~stitched~crocheted together (at least in my mind). Mostly 1st person, but other forms are used yet reverts back to author's eyes view. I like to try to put them together in a longer narrative, even if that isn't the way the author intended them... because that is just something I like to do.

Ballad of Reading Goal is my FAVORITE poem of any poet of any time period! "...Because Blood and wine are red and blood and wine were on his hands when they found him with the dead." I read a sample of this years ago and could not get this out of my head, it's haunting! And once I read the entire thing I was in love! Oscar Wilde all the way!

The Ballad of Reading Gaol was excerpted in a book of devotional readings I am using for Lent. My interest was piqued enough to buy the whole ballad, which Wilde produced during his imprisonment for homosexuality. I enjoy ballads -- I have a beautiful illustrated copy of Evangeline in my library -- and this has everything one could ask for. There is a central condemned character, and as his execution approaches, the poem describes the effect on the mood of the already despondent fellow

prisoners. It is a sober work and not too long, readable at one sitting. The Kindle version works nicely on the screen and is well-edited, without the misspellings that sometimes plague free online content (but sincere thanks to all who are involved in bringing us all those works!)

There was no doubt that Mr. Wilde is a master of the poetic word. All of his poetry that was written before he went to gaol was full of flowers, Gods and Goddesses and idyllic meadows. I was quite breathless from all that tulip tripping but I'm glad I sloughed on through to "Reading". This is by far Oscars most worthy poem. He perfectly caught the helpless cadence of men trapped in their own crime and punishment. I felt this unhappy man's plight like it were my own. Yes, Oscar, we do kill the ones we love. You also killed yourself but in the process created your most worthy words.

The Ballad of Reading Gaol is a searing and tortuous indictment of capital punishment. It questions the meaning and purpose of Justice and of ritual legalized murder under the cloak of laws made by Man. It turns a harsh unremitting spotlight on the horrors and inhumanity of incarceration. Wilde's broken and lacerated heart, far from wrecking his poetic genius, lead him to write with a profound compassion and sensitivity for his fellow prisoners. His suffering and eventual death were brought about because he loved men and was hated by hypocrites. The shame is theirs.

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