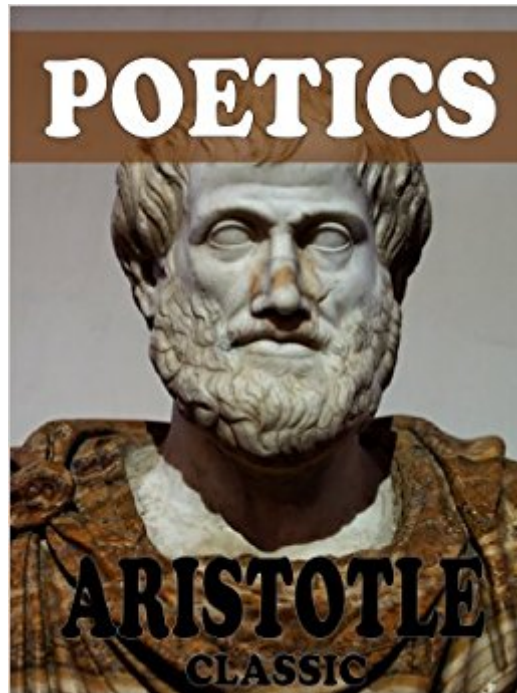




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Poetics (With Active Table Of Contents)



Synopsis

Aristotle's Poetics is the earliest-surviving work of dramatic theory and the first extant philosophical treatise to focus on literary theory. In it, Aristotle offers an account of what he calls "poetry" (a term which in Greek literally means "making" and in this context includes drama—comedy, tragedy, and the satyr play—as well as lyric poetry, epic poetry, and the dithyramb). He examines its "first principles" and identifies its genres and basic elements. His analysis of tragedy constitutes the core of the discussion. The work was lost to the Western world and often misrepresented for a long time. It was available through the Middle Ages and early Renaissance only through a Latin translation of an Arabic version written by Averroes.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Do not buy the 2011 Witch Books edition of the Poetics (says the publisher is CreateSpace, but the book itself says Witch Books). Get the Penguin edition instead. has oddly put all editions of Aristotle's Poetics under the same set of reviews. As a result, I read reviews for other editions

(possibly including the Penguin and Dover editions, but sometimes it is unclear from the review), but purchased the edition published in 2011 by Witch Books. I obviously wasn't paying close enough attention, because I saw reviews for the Penguin edition and assumed this was the Penguin edition. This was the only non-Kindle version of the Poetics that showed up on the entire first page of search results for "Aristotle Poetics." The Penguin edition only shows up if I specifically search "Aristotle Poetics Penguin." The Witch Books edition of the Poetics is terrible, and I would suggest that you go out of your way to avoid purchasing it. It is an old translation (presumably in the public domain) by S. H. Butcher, who, we are informed quite strangely in an image of the man's New York Times obituary, died in 1911. The image itself, and all images in the book including the cover, is of a very low digital quality (though the obituary is of such especially low quality that I can't even read the text below the headline), as the publisher apparently did not know how to select images of high enough digital resolution to properly print them on paper. We are also treated to an image of a bust of Socrates. Why a bust of Socrates? Well, after all, Socrates is basically Aristotle. The book has no introduction and, in case you noticed another reviewer mentioning a "wonderful and wonderfully annotated translation," this is not it and there are no footnotes whatsoever. Already on the first page there are typos and awkward misuses of punctuation: "They differ, however, from one:another in three respects, -- the medium, the objects, the manner or mode of imitation..." On the back cover we are treated to a quote from Aaron Sorkin, acclaimed author of The Social Network, whose recent article in Esquire entitled "The Meaning of Life" praises the value of the Poetics for writers. This quote, in an ugly font, completes the experience of this book as an unprofessional publication of a public domain translation that somehow has managed to become the first search result on for "Aristotle Poetics." (Note: I direct your attention to the review posted directly below mine entitled "All You Need to Know," including the very Aaron Sorkin quote just mentioned, and posted two days after the Witch Books edition was published. It was written by the publisher of the Witch Books edition. If you don't believe me, "Look Inside" that book and compare the names.) EDIT: Since I originally wrote this review, has thankfully begun to separate different editions of the Poetics (and possibly all books) into separate entries. As a result, people will no longer purchase this edition thinking they are buying the Penguin edition. My review of this particular edition stands.

If you are a fan of classic texts and want to find out what Aristotle had to say on drama, by all means buy this. HOWEVER, if you're a screenwriter looking to hone your craft, no honest person can say that this is a guide --interesting peripheral reading, perhaps. I bought it based on a quote by Aaron Sorkin. With all due respect to Mr. Sorkin, although it's a lot cooler to quote Aristotle than it is to

quote McKee, Turby, Walter or Ejri, it will help you a LOT more to read any of those books.

Oh, what hubris to think I can comment on, let alone critique, Aristotle! So, let me just say this: if you aspire to write plays, and to understand the basic tenets that form the foundation of effective drama, you must read, understand, and absorb this brief work by Aristotle. I recommend you read this book highlighter in hand, because this seminal reference work is full of key concepts you will want to refresh yourself on often until they become second nature.

"The rules are all in a sixty-four-page pamphlet by Aristotle called Poetics. It was written almost three thousand years ago, but I promise you, if something is wrong with what you're writing, you've probably broken one of Aristotle's rules." --Aaron Sorkin, from "The Meaning of Life" Esquire, January 2011

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