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The Overcoat



Synopsis

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Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I purchased this item thinking it was the English translation, probably because the title was in English and I could find no indication that it was the original Russian text. I would suggest making it very clear which language the book is written in. I ended up giving it away to one of my colleagues, who is a Russian teacher, to give to a student someday.

Really good book

The short story "The Overcoat" written by Nikolai Gogol is a creatively written story containing imagery and symbolism to appeal to the reader. The main character's name is Akaky Akakievich, who is destined to be a "no body" in this world from birth. He lives a hard life in Petersburg earning what little money he gets by copying documents. Gogol uses excellent imagery with the description of Akaky by using phrases such as "a complexion that might be aptly described as hemorrhoidal." Akaky is always the butt of jeers and jokes because of his social and physical status. Clerks often shower pieces of paper on the silent Akaky. One quote from Akaky often sticks in the minds of readers when he was being teased by one of the new clerks; "Let me be. Why do you do this to me? . . ." It is easy to see why Akaky is the butt of the jokes because he wears a shabby, almost see-through frock known as the "old dressing gown." He doesn't even care when scraps of melon rinds and trash are thrown on him when he is walking to and from work. The story gets underway when Akaky is forced to scrape together what little money he can and buy a new overcoat. This is the part of the story where he changes pretty drastically because he gains a little respect from his peers and is even seen at a party drinking a little champagne. The plot continues as something happens to Akaky and the overcoat. I highly recommend reading this short story, as I enjoyed it immensely. I often wrote as many essays as I could possible on this story in my 10th grade English class. After reading this book I grew to love Gogol and I look forward to looking for more of his works. I really admire Gogol's way of using imagery to describe Akaky and his symbolism of the old dressing gown and the new overcoat. The ending was not expected as you find out what happens to the overcoat, Akaky, and the others involved.

I feel that the dramatic portrayal of the character Akaky Akakievich was cleverly narrated. Also the way Gogol exemplifies the hardships of being poor and trying to work the way up the ladder of life only to see that you end up back at the beginning. Akaky is concerned with greed towards the end and is happy with where he is now only to leave the reader unsatisfied. The clever points that Gogol uses to refer to the devil and greed were baffling. One example that sticks out in my mind is the fact that the story was based on St. Petersburg, Russia, and the apostle of Jesus, Peter, was known to deny Jesus three times because he became devilish. While reading this book, I found myself feeling bad for Akaky because as the author says "True this creature, who had meekly bore the office jokes and gone quietly to his grave, had had, toward the end of his life, a cherished visitor—the overcoat, which for a brief moment had brightened his wretched existence. Then a crushing blow had finished everything, a blow such befalls the powerful of the earth..." I definitely recommend this book for its clever wit and many emotions it pulls you through, throughout the story.

These stories are a painful insight into the way Nikolay Vasilyevitch Gogol perceived the world around him. This is not easy reading - being the work of a person on the verge of insanity - but well worth the effort. The incredibly moody images of St. Petersburg - the northern Venice, locked in perpetual decay between East and West - serve as a splendid backdrop for strange disturbing stories. Every piece of this collection - take for instance "The Portrait" - a story that might have been written by H.P. Lovecraft or the surreal story of the escaped nose - is a gem. It just takes a little effort to appreciate it

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