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A Game Of Thrones: A Song Of Ice And Fire, Book 1



Synopsis

Here is the first volume in George R. R. Martin's magnificent cycle of novels that includes *A Clash of Kings* and *A Storm of Swords*. As a whole, this series comprises a genuine masterpiece of modern fantasy, bringing together the best the genre has to offer. Magic, mystery, intrigue, romance, and adventure fill these pages and transport us to a world unlike any we have ever experienced. Already hailed as a classic, George R. R. Martin's stunning series is destined to stand as one of the great achievements of imaginative fiction.

A Game of Thrones Long ago, in a time forgotten, a preternatural event threw the seasons out of balance. In a land where summers can last decades and winters a lifetime, trouble is brewing. The cold is returning, and in the frozen wastes to the north of Winterfell, sinister and supernatural forces are massing beyond the kingdom's protective Wall. At the center of the conflict lie the Starks of Winterfell, a family as harsh and unyielding as the land they were born to. Sweeping from a land of brutal cold to a distant summertime kingdom of epicurean plenty, here is a tale of lords and ladies, soldiers and sorcerers, assassins and bastards, who come together in a time of grim omens. Here an enigmatic band of warriors bear swords of no human metal; a tribe of fierce wildlings carry men off into madness; a cruel young dragon prince barter his sister to win back his throne; and a determined woman undertakes the most treacherous of journeys. Amid plots and counterplots, tragedy and betrayal, victory and terror, the fate of the Starks, their allies, and their enemies hangs perilously in the balance, as each endeavors to win that deadliest of conflicts: the game of thrones.

From the Trade Paperback edition. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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Customer Reviews

First off, I'm a heavy duty fan of GRRM. I've read over a 100 different fantasy authors in my time (started at 12; I'm now 32). Took about 5 years off from the genre b/c I felt it was all getting too formulaic and cliched. So, when I came back to fantasy at the end of 1999, I read the usual: Goodkind, Jordan, etc. and then someone told me about GRRM and man, that was the kicker! Here are the reasons to choose GRRM. I've also listed the reasons not to choose him to make it fair b/c I know there are certain personalities who won't like this series:

WHY TO READ GRRM

- (1) YOU ARE TIRED OF FORMULAIC FANTASY:** good lad beats the dark lord against impossible odds; boy is the epitome of good; he and all his friends never die even though they go through great dangers . . . the good and noble king; the beautiful princess who falls in love with the commoner boy even though their stations are drastically different . . . you get the idea. After reading this over and over, it gets old.
- (2) YOU ARE TIRED OF ALL THE HEROES STAYING ALIVE EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE UNDER CONSTANT DANGER:** this gets even worse where the author kills a main hero off but that person comes back later in the story. Or, a hero does die but magic brings him back. This sometimes carries to minor characters where even they may not die, but most fantasy authors like to kill them off to show that some risked the adventure and perished.
- (3) YOU ARE A MEDIEVAL HISTORY BUFF:** this story was influenced by the WARS OF THE ROSES and THE HUNDRED YEARS WAR.
- (4) YOU LOVE SERIOUS INTRIGUE WITHOUT STUPID OPPONENTS:** lots of layering; lots of intrigue; lots of clever players in the game of thrones. Unlike other fantasy novels, one side, usually the villain, is stupid or not too bright.
- (5) YOU ARE INTERESTED IN BIASED OPINIONS AND DIFFERENT TRUTHS:** GRRM has set this up where each chapter has the title of one character and the whole chapter is through their viewpoint. Interesting tidbit is that you get their perception of events or truths. But, if you pay attention, someone else will mention a different angle of truth in the story that we rarely see in other novels. Lastly and most importantly, GRRM doesn't try to tell us which person is right in their perception. He purposely leaves it vague so that we are kept guessing.
- (6) LEGENDS:** some of the most interesting characters are those who are long gone or dead. We never get the entire story but only bits and pieces; something that other fantasy authors could learn from to heighten suspense. Additionally, b/c the points of views are not congruent, we sometimes get different opinions.
- (7) WORDPLAY:** if you're big on metaphors and description, GRRM is your guy. Almost flawless flow.
- (8) LOTS OF CONFLICT:** all types, too; not just fighting but between characters through threats and intrigue.
- (9) MULTILAYERED PLOTTING; SUB PLOTS**

GALORE: each character has their own separate storyline; especially as the story continues and everyone gets scattered. This is one of the reasons why each novel is between 700-900 pages. (10)

SUPERLATIVE VARIED CHARACTERS: not the typical archetypes that we are used to in most fantasy; some are gritty; few are totally evil or good; GRRM does a great job of changing our opinions of characters as the series progress. This is especially true of Jaime in book three. (11)

REALISTIC MEDIEVAL DIALOGUE: not to the point that we can't understand it but well done. (12)

HEAPS OF SYMOBLISM AND PROPHECY: if you're big on that. (13)

EXCELLENT MYSTERIES: very hard to figure out the culprits; GRRM must have read a lot of mystery novels. (14)

RICHLY TEXTURED FEMALE CHARACTERS: best male author on female characters I have read; realistic on how women think, too. (15)

LOW MAGIC WORLD: magic is low key; not over the top so heroes can't get out of jams with it.

REASON TO NOT READ GRRM (1) YOU LIKE YOUR MAIN CHARACTERS: GRRM does a good job of creating more likeable characters after a few die. But, if that isn't your style, you shouldn't be reading it. He kills off several, not just one, so be warned. (2)

DO NOT CARE FOR GRITTY GRAY CHARACTERS: if you like more white and gray characters, this may unsettle you. I suggest Feist or Goodkind or Dragonlance if you want a more straight forward story with strong archetypes. (3)

MULTIPLE POINTS OF VIEWS TURN YOU OFF: if you prefer that the POVS only go to a few characters, this might be confusing for you. (4)

SWEARING, SEX: there's a lot of it in this book just as there is in real life. (5)

YOU DEMAND CLOSURE AT THE END OF EVERY BOOK: this isn't the case for all stories in the series. Some are still going on; some have been resolved; others have been created and are moving on. (6)

IF YOU WANT A TARGET OR SOMEONE TO BLAME: this can be done to some extent but not as much. This is b/c he doesn't try to make anyone necessarily good or evil. (7)

ARCHETYPES: some readers like archetypal characters because it's comfortable; we like the good young hero (sort of like Pug in Feist's THE RIFTWAR SAGA); it's familiar and we sometimes like to pretend we're this upcoming, great hero. You won't get much of this in GRRM with the exception of one or two characters. (8)

LENGTH: you don't want to get into a long fantasy epic series. In that case, look for shorter works as this is biiig. (9)

PATRIARCHY: men are most of the main characters with lots of power (one female exception).

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NB: THIS REVIEW REFERS TO THE KINDLE EDITION ALONE! This is a great book, and I've eaten up the series and have been on tenterhooks for George RR to get his finger out and publish A Dance with Dragons for YEARS now. (And the tv series!! Be still my beating heart!!!) But I have to comment on the extremely bad editing of the Kindle edition of A Game of Thrones. It is sloppy and

unprofessional. When I first got my kindle, I never experienced this, but now it seems like every book gets worse and worse. I thought Sacajawea was bad, but A Game of Thrones starts out with poor editing and gets progressively more appalling as you get further into the book. People who only read the kindle edition will think that Princess Elia comes from Dome, since that is how it is (almost) consistently spelled throughout the book. (It's Dorne). But on the other hand, the `tom cat' is a `torn cat'- go figure. Little things like that at first, but now, in the last third of the book, the mistakes are coming on nearly every page. Random parentheses, inappropriately capitalized words, italics that make no sense, sentences that end abruptly - that kind of thing. It would be irritating, but something I would just accept in a free edition of a book (maybe). But for a Kindle book that costs more than the paperback, I expect more. I also own a hard copy of this book, and none of these typos are in that edition. I'm not sure how the Kindle editions are made, but I expect the same kind of professional editing that you get in print books. You don't get that here, disappointingly.

I see where a reviewer below faulted A GAME OF THRONES for being so chock-full of "tragedy, bloodshed, cruelty, death, rape, incest, drunkenness, murder, (and) infanticide."Heh. Where I come from, that's a five-star recommendation. Glibness aside, the person has a point. A GAME OF THRONES is indeed a graphic, viciously unsentimental novel. It features all the offenses listed above and more besides. It revels in them. Can't you people see? That's the *point.* The writers of heroic fantasy like to write about huge and epic struggles between capital-letter Good and Evil. Yet over and over again they demonstrate only the most puerile understanding of what good and evil actually are. In their blinkered, constrained little worlds, "evil" consists of sitting in a dank tower all day sending orcs or demons or what-have-you after the Crampon of Justice or some similarly-named hogwash artifact. Not even the darkest of their generic Dark Lords would be caught boffing his own sister or murdering a child (much less get away with it), and in that fundamentally nonsensical bit of characterization lies the crux of their problem: by sticking horns and a lightning staff onto a one-dimensional pulp villain and calling it Ultimate Evil, they cheapen and debase *real* good and evil. I'm sure most of these writers realize this perfectly well; the problem is that they're writing to one of the most idiotically attenuated audiences on the face of the planet, people who really want to read the same book over and over ad infinitum with just enough variation from the template to create the illusion of difference. It's a sad state of affairs when we consider that fantasy, which should rightly be the domain of myth, wonder, and what Warren Ellis calls "mad, beautiful ideas," is the second most rigidly unimaginative genre out there (right behind romance, with whom it shares more than a few readers and tropes). The "Song of Ice and Fire" series is a show-stopping

six volume call to arms against this nonsense. Readers who come to the novels expecting another eminently predictable generic quest might be lulled to quiescence in the first few innocuous chapters, but will awake - sooner or later - to the unsettling realization that they're playing George R.R. Martin's game now. In A GAME OF THRONES, he systematically slaughters every sacred cow of "heroic fantasy" and, in so doing, injects a vigor and a zest for life and the written word into the genre that hasn't been seen since the beautiful insanity of Tolkien. Heroes die and villains turn out to be not so bad after all. Magic appears only very rarely, making it infinitely more interesting. The plot steadfastly refuses to go where you'd expect. And lest you purists think that Martin holds fantasy in contempt, consider this: unlike practically every other fantasy writer out there, he's gone to the trouble of writing this novel as if it were the most serious literature: his characters and their motivations are fully fleshed out (Eddard Stark and Tyrion Lannister are especially well-done), his prose is exciting and full of witty and lovely turns of phrase, and his themes are complex and multilayered. In other words, he's actually assumed that his readership is **intelligent.** After reading this and China Meiville's PERDIDO STREET STATION, I have renewed hope for the future of fantasy. Works like these deserve to be read, reread, and passed to friends; they yank the genre - and its readers - out of bed and lead it blinking and cursing into the light of genuine literary merit.

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