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Lysistrata (Signet Classics)



Synopsis

In *Lysistrata* a band of women tap into the awesome power of sex in order to end a war.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Having read several different translations of *Lysistrata*, I can report that the one you select may make all the difference in your opinion of this early comedy. Roche's translation is very vulgar but has good footnotes: get ready for cockney Spartans, however. Jack Lindsay's translation, done in 1925 (included in the Bantam edition of Aristophanes) seems to be overly literary in comparison to the original but lacks notes. It reads well, though sounds a little old-fashioned. The bawdry is present but made less direct; in this one the Spartan dialect is Scottish. I found Parker's translation to be the least satisfactory. The "hillbilly" dialect he gives the Spartans is painfully overdone, not to mention inaccurate, and the speeches are awkward and pedestrian. An excellent edition overall is Alan H. Sommerstein's in the Penguin Classic "*Aristophanes: Lysistrata and Other Plays*." The introduction and notes are extremely informative, and the translation itself strikes the right note to represent Aristophanes' style in English. (Once again, though, the Spartans are Scots.) But perhaps the best choice is Sarah Ruden's 2003 edition. Her dialogue is unusually funny without straying too far from the original. Added value comes from her four very readable essays on Greek democracy, warfare, women, and comedy. It's also printed on quality paper and comes with a great cover!

"*Lysistrata*," the play by Aristophanes, has been published in an anonymous translation as part of

the Dover Thrift Editions series. The opening commentary on the text notes that this play dates back to 411 BCE. Aristophanes tells the story of his title character, an Athenian woman who, weary of war, conceives a bold plan: she enlists the women of Greece to refuse to have sex with their men until the men make peace. The plot of this play is thus quite simple, but it is marvelously handled by the author. The play is a rich and effective mix of slapstick antics, bawdy wordplay, and biting sociopolitical commentary. At the center of this enjoyable play is the commanding figure of Lysistrata. Articulate and resolute, she is truly one of the great characters of world drama; she's a woman with a bold vision. Although it is a funny comedy, "Lysistrata" does deal with some serious issues that remain relevant after all these centuries. Recommended as a companion text: "Necessary Targets," a play by Eve Ensler. This non-comedic drama also deals with the issue of women in a country at war.

Lysistrata is perhaps my favorite of the Greek plays—it's never pompous or overbearing, and it never overwhelms itself with flowery prose. In addition, it's one of the few Greek plays I've read that portrays women as genuine human beings rather than murderers, decorations, or idiots. They're smart, sexy, and socially aware, especially in a time when they were very seriously repressed. Lysistrata is an intelligent Athenian woman who is sick and tired of the Greek city-states warring against each other. She calls all the women she can round up and comes up with a strategy to end the wars: Keep away from their husbands' beds, and the men will make peace with other cities to make peace with their wives. After a great deal of whining, the women agree to deprive their husbands of sex until peace is achieved. But that's only the beginning of what Lysistrata has planned... Too many feminist tales end up being heavy-handed—though women are on the side of peace and right in this, it doesn't bang you over the head. The men are human as well. The comedy is sly and witty (though full of mild sex talk—nothing too raunchy) and the scene where one young woman unmercifully teases her love-hungry husband will have you rolling. I can see someone making this into a movie—in modern or ancient settings, the dialogue can still be deciphered without a translation program *wink*. It's a story about the power that women can wield and the lengths that they can go to. Read, laugh, guffaw! You won't regret it!

". . . Here's how it works: We'll paint, powder, and pluck ourselves to the last detail, and stay inside, wearing those filmy tunics that set off everything we have— and then link up to the men. They'll snap to attention, go absolutely mad to love us— but we won't let them. We'll abstain.—I imagine they'll conclude a treaty rather quickly!" I picked this up when I saw that many peace groups were putting it

on as sort of an answer to the warlike nature of our times. Apparently, it's a timeless notion- The women of the city were tired with wars, so they decided to collectively cut their husbands off. Of course, this leads to man funny incedents, as neither men or women find it easy to deal with this. I wonder what everyone is suggesting today? The Great American Poke Out? This is a wonderful, short play, and the translation preserves all of the puns and metaphors that color this comedy with innuendo. In a warlike world, it's fun to be able to sit back and enjoy a little comic fantasy. And at the price, you're paying less than the average movie: for something far better, in my humble opinion. Get this book!

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