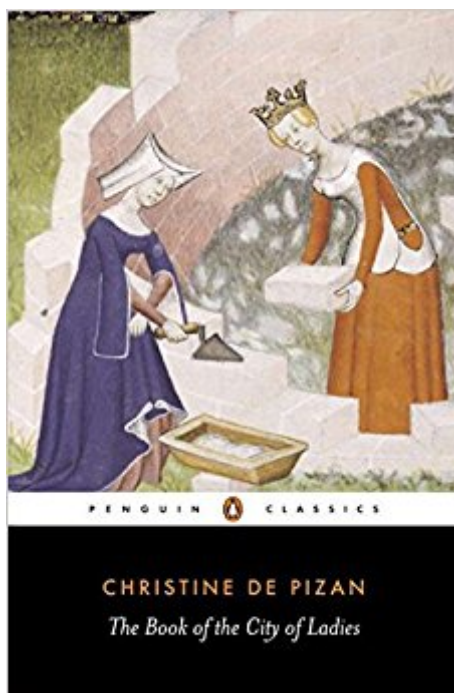


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The Book Of The City Of Ladies (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

A fascinating insight into the debates and controversies about the position of women in medieval culture, written by France's first professional woman of letters. The pioneering *Book of the City of Ladies* begins when, feeling frustrated and miserable after reading a male writer's tirade against women, Christine de Pizan has a dreamlike vision where three virtues—Reason, Rectitude and Justice—appear to correct this view. They instruct her to build an allegorical city in which womankind can be defended against slander, its walls and towers constructed from examples of female achievement both from her own day and the past: ranging from warriors, inventors and scholars to prophetesses, artists and saints. Christine de Pizan's spirited defence of her sex was unique for its direct confrontation of the misogyny of her day, and offers a telling insight into the position of women in medieval culture. The *Book of the City of Ladies* provides positive images of women, ranging from warriors and inventors, scholars to prophetesses, and artists to saints. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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Customer Reviews

Text: English (translation) Original Language: French

Christine de Pizan (c.1364-1430) was France's first professional woman of letters and the author of *The Book of the City of Ladies*.

Jung would have had a field day with this account, written in the form of a dream which came to the author. Christine de Pizan was one of the most remarkable women of her day or any day, scholarly and self-supporting in a time when women were mostly without rights. She wrote this book in defense of women, who were generally portrayed in literature as shallow, petty, and the source of most of the evil in the world. She lists and describes many of the great women of history with whom she will people her *City of Ladies*; these descriptions are very interesting reading, particularly for scholars of classical literature, Shakespeare etc., because some of them contain details about characters we're familiar with not readily available from other sources. Not a book for everyone, but fascinating if this is within your field of interest.

Christine de Pizan was an extraordinary writer and poet. Her books of poetry are as beautiful as any you are likely to read. Some of her poems concern the death of her husband, some are loved poems, but all are marvelous in expression and feeling. She was a woman who wrote so well as to support her entire family by herself after her husband died and left her a widow. Besides poetry she wrote a book on the art of war, and also this book, "*The book of the City of Ladies*," which is one of the first ever written about women running their own affairs. Christine was so successful that she is depicted in thousands of paintings illustrating women writers. This translation is a good one.

Not for information, but an entertaining read. De Pizan used Boccaccio's "*On Famous Women*" as her primary resource, so many facts are wrong and some of his attitude bleeds through. She was ahead of her time. The book provides an entertaining insight into what passed for feminism in the Middle Ages.

Christine falls asleep while contemplating why women in her society get such a bad rap, and has a long dream about exemplary women and their characteristics. Did you ever wonder why we just accept that women in the Middle Ages were considered demons in disguise? Christine tells us all about what she thinks of that concept and of those who insist on spreading such maliciousness, all

in an engaging story full of examples of brave, courageous, intelligent, pious, beautiful, generous women. The book was written to dispel some of the nastier slanders then current about women, but it's still good reading today. I confess that during the part about martyrs I wandered off a bit (it is some gruesome stuff in places), but as a period source, it's definitely one every history maven ought to have. Christine is intelligent, observant, and witty; her writing fairly sparkles with indignation over the treatment of women and her sardonic amusement at those men spreading those lies. While hyper-Catholic and in places highly allegorical (and in many places its version of "history" is highly questionable, of course), it is an essential look at a time period where women didn't often make their views known in written form. This book is distinct from "The Book of the Treasure of the City of Ladies".

Initially bought for a class, but Christine's work is a wonderful glimpse into what medieval life was like.

A great edition of a medieval proto-Feminist work. I highly suggest Pizan to anyone interested in History or Gender Studies. This work provides a fascinating barometer for the state of thought surrounding gender roles in Medieval Europe.

Noble, and really ground-breaking for the fifteenth century. One of the first feminist books probably ever written. It is written, obviously in a dated fashion, so the reading can get a little redundant.

This book will prove that history and human argument just repeat themselves in endless cycles. It has gotten me through some very long and boring waits. Your mileage may vary.

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