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Dangerous Liaisons (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

A new translation of one of the most notorious novels of all time. Published just years before the French Revolution, Laclos's great novel of moral and emotional depravity is a disturbing and ultimately damning portrayal of a decadent society. Aristocrats and ex-lovers Marquise de Merteuil and Vicomte de Valmont embark on a sophisticated game of seduction and manipulation to bring amusement to their jaded lives. While Merteuil challenges Valmont to seduce an innocent convent girl, he is also occupied with the conquest of a virtuous married woman. Eventually their human pawns respond, and the consequences prove to be more serious--and deadly--than the players could have ever predicted. 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.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"If this book burns, it burns as only ice can burn." -Baudelaire

The complex moral ambiguities of seduction and revenge make *Les Liaisons dangereuses* (1782)

one of the most scandalous and controversial novels in European literature. Its prime movers, the Vicomte de Valmont and the Marquise de Merteuil, gifted, wealthy, and bored, form an unholy alliance and turn seduction into a game - a game which they must win. And they play with such wit and style that it is impossible not to admire them - until they discover that the game has mysterious rules that they cannot understand. In the ensuing vicious battle there can be no victors, and the innocent will suffer with the guilty. This new translation gives Laclos a modern voice, and readers will be able to judge whether the novel is as 'diabolical' and 'infamous' as its critics have claimed, or whether it has much to tell us about the kind of world we ourselves live in.

The type setting is too small and the horizontal length of the text is too long. It makes for difficult reading. The translation follows the original French sentence by sentence without taking any creative liberties for the sake of flow. When the language gets archaic and hard to read that is because it is also that way in the French version. This makes the book harder to understand, any layman not familiar with this older style of writing, will have to tolerate brief moments of ineligibility, but it would be the same for a layman French reader and so at least you know the translation is faithful to the original even in linguistic register.

I bought this for my Kindle after having seen the movie. I have to say, as much as I loved the movie, it's amazing how much is lost without the epistolary element; the way Laclos juxtaposes things -- Valmont's manipulative letters to Danceny's ardent ones, Merteuil's accusations against Prevan to what Valmont actually does to Cecile -- is something that one misses when the letters are taken out of the mix. If there is one flaw to the book it is the heavy handed way in which Valmont finally achieves his great conquest with Madame de Tourvel...after so much subtlety it seemed cheap and melodramatic to use the tactic he did. This book is certainly dense, and there are entire letters which do not move the plot forward (Danceny's and Cecile's letters to each other are like a musical number in a pre-Oklahoma! stage show: they tell us more of what we already know, but rarely give us anything new) and one gets the sense that some things get lost in translation -- I especially felt that since I'm pretty sure I ran across several sentences that were just plain ungrammatical or generally made no sense, as if they'd been babelfished. However, I would recommend this book to anyone who is interested in a juicy, lascivious classic.

This is not an easy book - the story is told by the letters that are sent between the various characters. You need to keep track of who is who - but the suspense builds at a very slow pace! It is

amazing when you consider when the book was written how evil people can be! I guess bad people have and will be around!

Bought this book for a class I was taking and quickly read the first 100 pages (which I NEVER do). Got to class the first day and the professor said we didn't need it, but that he was glad I purchased it because it was in his top 10 books of all time. I finished reading it and I have no regrets. What a trip! I love reading things in letter format. The progression of plot and characters had me turning pages like few books can. It's been a while since I read it, but I remember how dark, delightful, insightful, and mind-blowing of a read it was. Writing this review is making me want to read it again.

Shocking! Scandalous! An outrage to public decency! This book must have caused quite a stir when it was first printed in the late 1700's. Sexual innuendo leaps from the pages of this beautifully written epistolary novel. De Laclos certainly accomplished what he set out to do, to create a work that would last long after his death. The Marquise de Merteuil and the Vicomte de Valmont are two of the most devious minded characters I've ever had the pleasure to be disgusted by. Seriously. Still, I had to admire their dedication. They want revenge and will stop at nothing to get it. They know what they are doing and they do it well. I thoroughly savored every page of *Dangerous Liaisons*. The wit and wickedness will be on my mind for a long time to come.

I read this for a book group I belong to, I'd put it off for years. Boy, I wish I had read it much sooner. The wit, the absolute gall of these letter writers is amazing. It's a toss up whether one is fascinated, repelled, or amazed by them. If you enjoy a slowly unwinding story, told in letters between various correspondents, you'll love this story. Also I'd recommend the film...with John Malkovich and Michelle Pfeiffer.

I bought this, being familiar with the original French, to see if it was suitable for the reading group I'm a member of at the retirement community I'm currently in. It isn't. Looking at various reviews, it is probably the best available English translation, but the editing editorial baggage is too heavy for the purpose (on the first page there is a footnote which has a footnoted word ;-). By contrast the French, although sometimes a bit archaic, is very clear and clear.

Book arrived in good condition - no surprises there, which is always a plus. As a language person, I enjoy making observations about the translation itself as much as enjoying this incredible,

heartbreaking book. This is a very enjoyable read, excellent also for language/translation enthusiasts who like to compare translations for the fun of it.

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