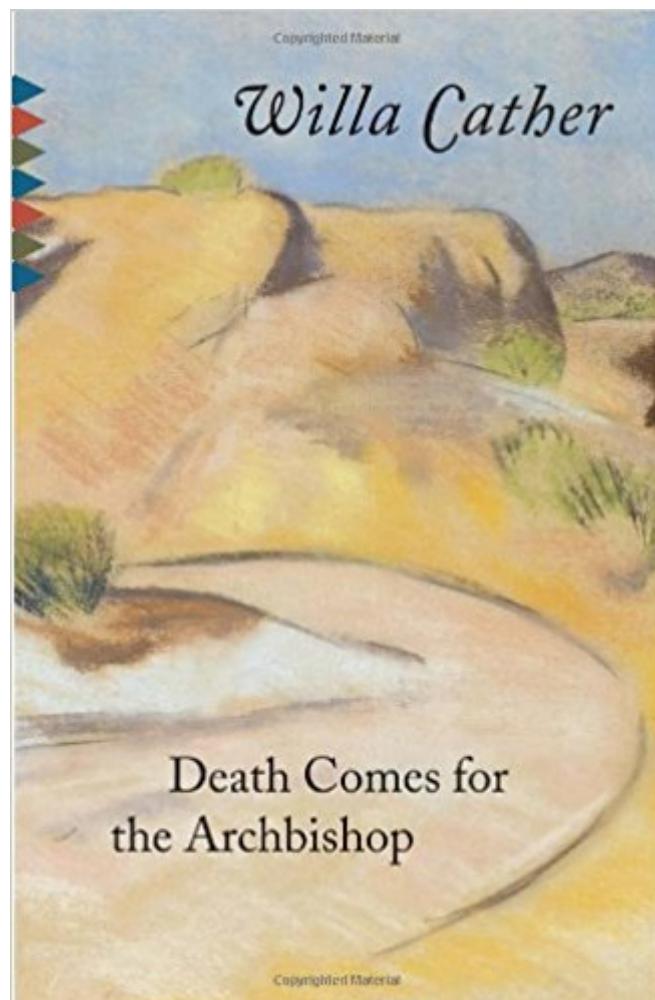


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Death Comes For The Archbishop (Vintage Classics)



Synopsis

Willa Cather's best known novel; a narrative that recounts a life lived simply in the silence of the southwestern desert.

Book Information

Paperback: 297 pages

Publisher: Vintage (June 16, 1990)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0679728899

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Product Dimensions: 0.7 x 1.9 x 5 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (429 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #7,315 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #24 inÂ Books > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > Religious & Inspirational > Historical #62 inÂ Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Literature & Fiction > Westerns #72 inÂ Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Literature & Fiction > Historical

Customer Reviews

Based on two real life French Catholic priests who were sent to the American Southwest in 1851, Willa Cather's 1927 novel captures the essence of their experiences. The Mexican people, formerly ruled by Spain, had been Catholic for centuries and welcomed the Bishop, Jean Marie Latour, and his Vicar, Father Joseph. As the two men travel through the countryside, it is clear that the landscape itself is a major character in this novel. Ms. Cather's descriptions brought me right there and I could almost breath the perfume of the earth as well as feel the impact of the mountains of rock and open desert. In what reads like a series of short stories, the priests travel throughout the area and meet a wide variety of people along the way. Always, their adventures take on mythical and religious significance, such as when Father Latour finds himself quite lost and then sees a juniper tree in the shape of a cross that leads him to food and shelter. Each of these stories has a crisis and each crisis is answered by a religious experience. This deepens the faith of the two priests who share their common religious feelings even though they have very different personalities. Ms. Cather had the uncanny ability to capture exactly what each character felt and let the reader experience it moment to moment. Her detailed descriptions are many faceted. For example she uses the character of Kit Carson to show both gentleness and compassion as well as

vile cruelty to the Indians. Always, she just lays out the story and lets the reader make his or her own judgments. One of the problems I had with the book was my own desire to have the priests confront some difficult choice. That didn't happen. Their faith was always there.

After reading with fascination the prior forty-plus reviews, they would appear to fall into three categories: juveniles who were forced to read the book for school, giving the book the lowest possible ratings. PC-types who judge both the writing of the book and the actions and beliefs of the characters by today's standards--such smug intolerance! Thirdly, those who love literature for its own sake, belonging to the community that has made this one of the classics in American writing. I admit, I am part of the third group. I fell in love with the writing of Cather as a teenager. To date, I have found no other author who can illustrate the great expanse of America and the vision of our ancestors in the way she could. Being set in New Mexico, the feeling of expanse of the American West permeates every page. I agree with another reviewer that this book is the writing equivalent of O'Keefe. While I can understand the young ones criticizing the book after being forced to read it, I don't understand adults who were dissatisfied. Was this their first Cather? Hopefully not (I'd recommend starting with "Song of the Lark" or "O Pioneers"). Her writing is not an unknown quantity. I've read the book many times over the past thirty years, and it's not a book for those who like to have their plots laid out for them. The plot is obscure, as Cather leaves the main story line with chapters diverging like side trails off a main path. Though not hard to read, it's not a book for those in a hurry. It's best being read in a comfy chair on a rainy afternoon next to a window. The sense of timeliness, of the stretching on into eternity, is seldom better conveyed than in this book.

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