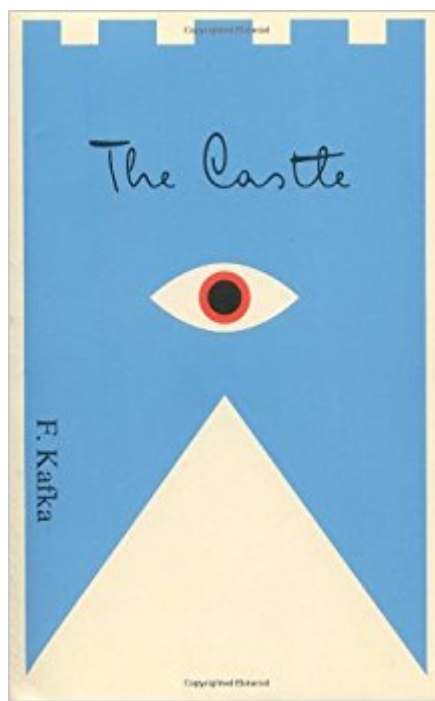


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The Castle



Synopsis

Translated and with a preface by Mark Harman
Left unfinished by Kafka in 1922 and not published until 1926, two years after his death, *The Castle* is the haunting tale of K.'s relentless, unavailing struggle with an inscrutable authority in order to gain access to the Castle. Scrupulously following the fluidity and breathlessness of the sparsely punctuated original manuscript, Mark Harman's new translation reveals levels of comedy, energy, and visual power previously unknown to English language readers.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Franz Kafka was obsessed with dreams, and *THE CASTLE* is his attempt to depict the modern world of corporate and governmental bureaucracy as a crazed nightmare. The novel possesses the logic of dreams, and there is a dreamlike quality to everything that happens in the book. As in a dream, people and situations transform effortlessly into something entirely different, as when one of the young, silly assistants of the protagonist K. suddenly appears to be a much older, decrepit man. Though his transformation is absurd, it is part and parcel of the logic of the village dominated by *The Castle*. I first read this novel years ago when the only option in translation was the Muir translation. This new complete translation, which includes a large section that Kafka's friend and literary executor Max Brod decided to excise, transforms the novel into an entirely different book. For one thing, the section that Brod left out indicates even more vividly the degree to which the novel is concerned with depicting the more horrific aspects of modern bureaucratic life. For another, the manner in which the text simply breaks off in mid-sentence reinforces the nightmarish quality of the

book, for just as we wake up from a dream, never able to complete the tale, so we break away from the narrative, never knowing what K.'s fate is. The novel contains more a situation than a plot. K., a surveyor, arrives in a village having been hired by the local Castle, presumably to survey. Instead, K. quickly learns that he may not have been hired at all, and manages to break rapidly a number of laws of which he was utterly unaware and whose logic is far from obvious.

Review of "The Castle" by Franz Kafka This book made me into a Kafka admirer. He brings life to characters in otherwise drab situations and makes them seem very real. The reader feels the frustration, absurdity, the pettiness and the powerlessness in a personal way. You feel the haughtiness and aloofness of the Castle staff as if they were a part of your own community. You feel the pettiness and delusional gossip of the townspeople as if you were seeing it first hand. The story is riveting and the pace seems fast even when there is little action. The story starts with the protagonist (identified only by his initial, K.) walking to what sounds like a routine surveying job. Soon he is frustrated by a very confusing series of obstacles. As the story develops the obstacles become more chaotic. K.'s original purpose in going to the castle is never fully elaborated and his motives seem lost or stolen. The forces acting upon K. are shrouded. It seems as if some invisible force has plotted to test K. to the limit of human endurance of tolerance of ambiguity. Kafka combines the themes of: social class commentary, alienation from a heartless social system, absence of any protective power, salvation, redemption, fear of strangers, fear of change, search for the meaning of life, inscrutability of authorities, indifference of forces ruling human fate, persistence in the face lost purpose, abuse of power and acceptance of pointlessness goals. As the plot progresses it takes on a surreal nightmare quality. Is the protagonist having a nightmare, going insane or confronting the reality of his situation? There is no end to the frustration.

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