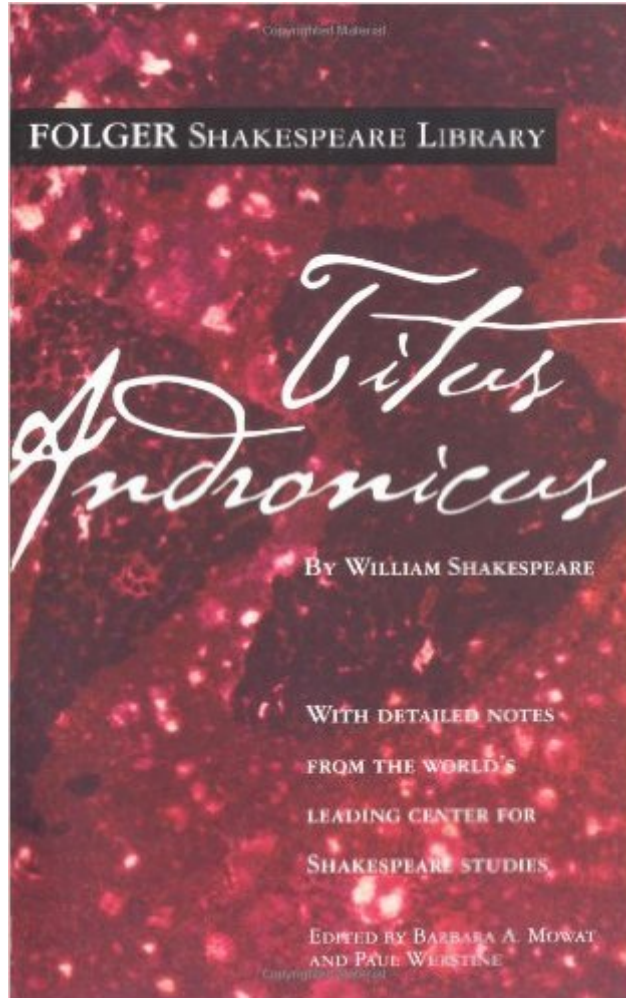


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Titus Andronicus (Folger Shakespeare Library)



Synopsis

Titus Andronicus is the earliest tragedy and the earliest Roman play attributed to Shakespeare. Titus, a model Roman, has led twenty-one of his twenty-five sons to death in Rome's wars; he stabs another son to death for what he views as disloyalty to Rome. Yet Rome has become a wilderness of tigers. After a death sentence is imposed on two of his three remaining sons, and his daughter is raped and mutilated, Titus turns his loyalty toward his family. Aaron the Moor, a magnificent villain and the empress's secret lover, makes a similar transition. After the empress bears him a child, Aaron devotes himself to preserving the baby. Retaining his thirst for evil, he shows great tenderness to his little family—a tenderness that also characterizes Titus before the terrifying conclusion. The authoritative edition of Titus Andronicus from The Folger Shakespeare Library, the trusted and widely used Shakespeare series for students and general readers, includes:

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Essay by Alexander Leggatt The Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC, is home to the world's largest collection of Shakespeare's printed works, and a magnet for Shakespeare scholars from around the globe. In addition to exhibitions open to the public throughout the year, the Folger offers a full calendar of performances and programs. For more information, visit Folger.edu.

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Customer Reviews

As usual, the language of Shakespeare is elegant and effective. The story, however, is terrible. The main character is every bit as nasty and despicable as the villains, and the only truly sympathetic character in the entire play is raped, has her tongue cut out so that she can't identify her attackers, has her hands cut off so that she can't weave the story of her attack into a mosaic, and is ultimately murdered. By her father, the "hero" of the play. Because what happened to her "shames him". The primary villain of the piece is very one-dimensional; he does evil, not because he hates the hero, or because the hero wronged his queen (which he did), but because he is a villain and takes joy in doing evil. He is specifically quoted as saying that he regrets only those few occasions in his life in which he has missed the opportunity of doing evil. In addition, it is difficult to suspend disbelief far enough to accept that people can have their hands cut off and not bleed to death; it's bad enough that Titus, the main character, has his hand cut off and survives without much show of faintness from lack of blood -- at least he's a soldier who has suffered injuries before and learned to "soldier through" them, and he might have had the opportunity and the knowledge to bind his wound. But Lavinia is no soldier, has BOTH her hands cut off (in addition to her tongue) making it unlikely that even if she knows how to stop bleeding, she would be able to with no hands, it's unlikely that her assailants would have made much effort to tend her wounds, and yet, "Monty Python-like", she shows no sign of coming anywhere near to bleeding to death.

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