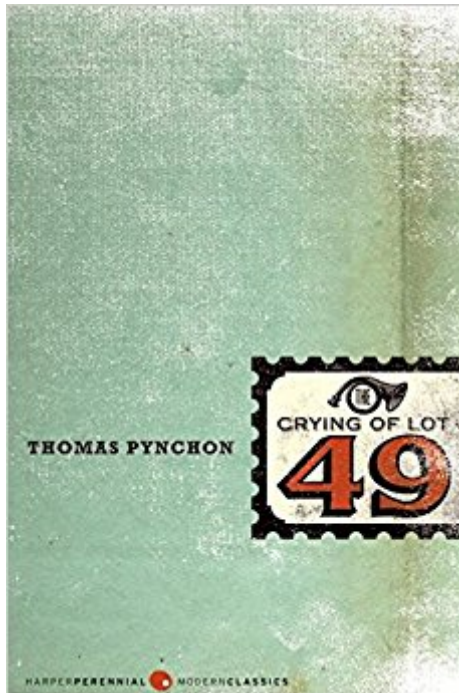




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The Crying Of Lot 49 (Perennial Fiction Library)



Synopsis

Thomas Pynchon's *V* is a classic post-modern satire, which tells the wonderfully unusual story of Oedipa Maas, first published in 1965. When her ex-lover, wealthy real-estate tycoon Pierce Inverarity dies and designates her the co-executor of his estate, California housewife Oedipa Mass is thrust into a paranoid mystery of metaphors, symbols, and the United States Postal Service. Traveling across Southern California, she meets some extremely interesting characters, and attains a not-inconsiderable amount of self-knowledge.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"A puzzle, an intrigue, a literary and historical tour de force with a strongly European flavor." -- San Francisco Examiner "The comedy crackles, the puns pop the satire explodes." -- New York Times "The work of a virtuoso with prose intricate symbolic order [is] akin to that of Joyce's *Ulysses*." -- Chicago Tribune "A puzzle, an intrigue, a literary and historical tour de force with a strongly European flavor." -- San Francisco Examiner "The comedy crackles, the puns pop the satire explodes." -- New York Times "The work of a virtuoso with prose intricate symbolic order [is] akin to that of Joyce's *Ulysses*." -- Chicago Tribune --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

The highly original satire about Oedipa Maas, a woman who finds herself enmeshed in a worldwide conspiracy, meets some extremely interesting characters, and attains a not inconsiderable amount of self knowledge.

Whereas there's no denying that the components of this book are well-written and immaculate, the plot is an odd and frustrating juxtaposition of simple and abundantly complex (plus a bunch of surrealism that would only make sense if I were on LSD). I'm a huge fan of *Infinite Jest* and although this clued me in to where some of the sentences in that book may be inspired from, it was not what I wanted at all. Be better-versed in postmodernism or Pynchon before picking this up - I did not "get it".

I read Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* many years ago. A weathered copy was given to me by a new friend, as a test of our compatibility I suppose. I found the intricacy of the story very enjoyable and the characters colorful and interesting. I enjoyed the journey the author took me on - the layers of the story. It is a story that invites discussion which is evident by the many books that have been written about the author and this book in particular. At the time I was reading *The Crying of Lot 49* I had no idea that others found it as important. This personal connection I felt when reading the story is what makes Pynchon's writing so special to me. My copy is still on my bookshelf waiting to be passed along.

Pynchon is a clever writer but his message is one of despair and hopelessness. His version of existentialism which underlies the entire novel is that we are absurd creatures living meaningless lives and unaware of our insignificance. The search by the central character for information regarding an obscure ancient postal system takes her to strange places inhabited by strange people. There is occasional humor and many clever metaphors of persons who are lost, aimless, or pursuing senseless objectives. It is not a pleasant read and certainly not inspiring.

This is a difficult novel to evaluate at first reading. Obviously it is a fine book, yet it needs some further reading and analysis for a more definite opinion. After some research and further thinking I will get back to it. In the mean time I'll give it four stars.

It's Pynchon!!!

Pynchon has a way of kidnapping your mind into an elaborate machination that is part conspiracy and part hoax. It is a form he uses in many of his works to communicate a particular symptom of a highly complex society eternally suffering the mid-to-late stages of a terminal lifestyle disease. It's

pretty magnificent for those of us inclined to believe we're living in a dystopia, and have for some time.

I don't normally advocate criminal behavior, but if you're going to read this book, I might suggest you smoke something a bit stronger than tobacco if you're into that kind of thing. It might help to bring this book into focus. I wouldn't be surprised to learn that the author was in a similar state when he wrote it. I'm not sure how much I can tell you about the plot. We start off with Oedipa Maas, a young suburban California housewife, who finds out that she's been named executor of her ex-boyfriend's estate. While diligently attending to the estate (not to mention attending to her co-executor), she stumbles upon a symbol scrawled on a bathroom wall with a reference to something called "WASTE". Oedipa develops an obsession with the symbol which seems to pop up with increasing frequency the more she pursues its meaning. Her adventures lead her from person to person, each character more bizarre than the last, and from unbelievable situation to impossible event. This book is maddeningly impossible to get your head around. Nothing ever quite makes sense, but there's always something tantalizing just around the bend. Maybe if you read a few more pages it will start to make sense. But the further you go on, the less sense it makes, but yet the more we feel we might just get rewarded if we read a little further. We follow Oedipa's descent into conspiracy madness through a long-winded description of a five-act Jacobean revenge play, an encounter with a truly mad scientist, an all-night ramble through the seamy side of San Francisco, the intricacies of stamp collecting, and epic accounts of the obscurest points of the history of mail delivery (although, how much, if at all, that "history" resembles reality is more than I can say). At one point in her obsession, Oedipa looks at the possibilities. Either she's stumbled into one of the most elaborate conspiracies in the history of the world, or she's been set up by her late ex-boyfriend in some sort of elaborate hoax, or else she's mentally ill. We sense all along that the author is playing with Oedipa, poking fun at her and her frail human ability to grasp and comprehend. But then we realize that he's poking fun at us too. And at life itself and all of our grand and serious searching for The Meaning of Life. The characters are mostly quite unsympathetic and unengaging. Mostly that's because they don't stick around long enough for us to get to know them. But even the main character, Miz Maas, doesn't arouse our sympathy. That's because none of the characters are actual human beings; they are mere symbols in Pynchon's game of life. Our clue is in their corny, punny names: "Mucho" Maas, Genghis Cohen, you get the picture. The book is not meant to be taken as a literal story any more than "Gulliver's Travels" is. Both are satires. But unlike "Gulliver's Travels", it is unclear who or what is being satirized in "The Crying of Lot 49". Some things are obvious, like America's post-war

cookie-cutter suburban blight and the empty lives that accompany such blight. But it's more than that, though what the "more" is, is always just out of reach. Although this is a very slim volume, it's not easy reading. Pynchon's wordy prose can at times go on for pages without completing a single paragraph. It is almost always difficult to follow exactly what's happening and to keep the characters straight. Nonetheless, I recommend this book as an introduction to Thomas Pynchon largely because it is so short. Judging by the reviews, Pynchon has a devoted following and a number of critics. This book is perfect for discovering which you are. For myself, I'm not quite sure yet. I ended up liking the book in spite of myself, but I don't really think it will stick with me. Some ambiguous books leave me puzzling over them for weeks or months to come, but I don't think this will be one of them.

Haven't started reading it yet, but glanced around and read a few pages and enjoyed the little bit I saw. Love Pynchon, he is so eclectic. The book came well packed, all good.

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