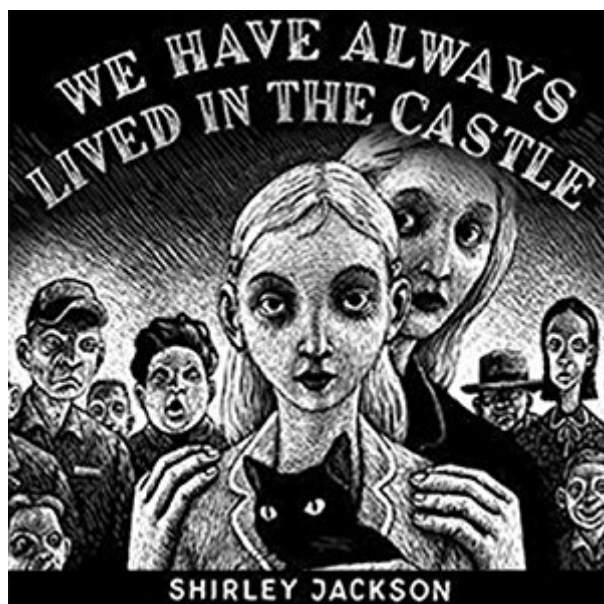


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We Have Always Lived In The Castle



Synopsis

Part of the Penguin Orange Collection, a limited-run series of twelve influential and beloved American classics in a bold series design offering a modern take on the iconic Penguin paperback. For the seventieth anniversary of Penguin Classics, the Penguin Orange Collection celebrates the heritage of Penguin's iconic book design with twelve influential American literary classics representing the breadth and diversity of the Penguin Classics library. These collectible editions are dressed in the iconic orange and white tri-band cover design, first created in 1935, while french flaps, high-quality paper, and striking cover illustrations provide the cutting-edge design treatment that is the signature of Penguin Classics Deluxe Editions today. *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* Taking readers deep into a labyrinth of dark neurosis, *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* is perhaps the crowning achievement of Shirley Jackson's brilliant career: a deliciously unsettling novel about a perverse, isolated, and possibly murderous family and the dramatic struggle that ensues when an unexpected visitor interrupts their unusual way of life. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I am a big fan of Shirley Jackson. I first became interested in her after stumbling across a collection of her short stories, and since then, I have been hooked. *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* is my favorite Shirley Jackson novel. *The Haunting of Hill House* has generated much more speculation and interest world-wide than did *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*, but in my opinion, there is

much more to be said for this book. There is much more to this novel than it seems when you first start reading it. Many things throughout the book will appeal to you, and simultaneously tear your heart in two, like the villager's hatred of Merricat (the narrator and main character) and their horrible, shameful treatment of her. This is a complex novel. It is not for everyone. It is a difficult read, because if you aren't into the book, then you won't understand what's going on. It reminds me of J.D. Salinger's. His books, especially if you've read his short stories, are to be puzzled over, yet never completely understood. The story is about Merricat and Constance, two sisters who live isolated on the edge of town at Blackwood Manor. They seldom venture out of their home, and when they do are subjected to abuse at the hands of the villagers, who particularly enjoy throwing rocks at Merricat and calling her names. Readers come onto the scene of the story years after a poisoning during supper at Blackwood Manor, which killed most of the family. For years Merricat, their uncle, and Merricat's older sister Constance have lived in solitude until Charles, a distant cousin, comes calling. He plays upon Constance's desire for a normal life, telling her how unnatural her life is at Blackwood Manor, while at the same time displaying to the reader a strong interest in the family fortune.

I think I am just about the only person out there who had not read Shirley Jackson's, *We Have Always Lived in a Castle*. Well, now I have, and this 146 page book left me feeling a bit unsettled. Creepy, atmospheric and beyond clever, this is one book that will leave some of you scratching your head when you get to the end. In brief, Merricat, as she prefers to be called, begins narrating this story in this way: "My name is Mary Katherine Blackwood. I am eighteen years old, and I live with my sister Constance. I have often thought that with any luck at all I could have been born a werewolf, because the two middle fingers on both my hands are the same length, and I have had to be content with what I had. I dislike washing myself, and dogs, and noise. I like my sister Constance, and Richard Plantagenet, and Amanita phalloides, the death-cup mushroom. Everyone else in my family is dead." From the opening paragraph, I thought something is very strange about Merricat. She is eighteen and acts like a child. She is extremely superstitious, believing in signs and burying items in the ground to secure the property. She is also very protective of her sister. She lives with her sister and Uncle Julius, who on the surface appears to have some sort of dementia. The three of them live in a secluded mansion, and never leave the house, except for Merricat who ventures into town for necessities about twice a week. It is clear that the townspeople fear and dislike the remaining family members. The Blackwoods avoid the neighbors, preferring the security of seclusion. They even avoid the few who are friendly.

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