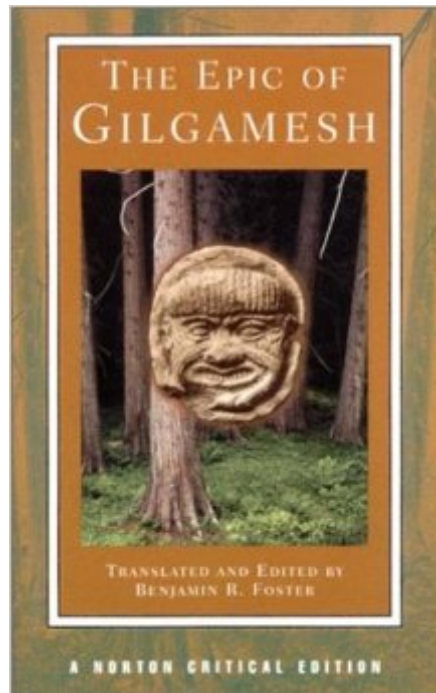


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The Epic Of Gilgamesh (Norton Critical Editions)



Synopsis

The Epic of Gilgamesh is the world's oldest epic masterpiece. More than a thousand years before Homer or the Bible, Mesopotamian poets sang of the hero-king Gilgamesh, who sought to crown his superhuman exploits by finding eternal life. This Norton Critical Edition presents translations by Benjamin R. Foster, Douglas Frayne, and Gary Beckman of the entire Gilgamesh narrative tradition, with some texts now in English for the first time. In addition to the eleven tablets of the great Akkadian epic, written around 1700 B.C.E., the book includes seven Sumerian poems about Gilgamesh, written before 2000 B.C.E., as well as the later Hittite version and other related sources, among them a Babylonian parody of the epic. "Criticism" provides interpretive essays by William Moran, Thorkild Jacobsen, and Rivkah Harris and concludes with a modern poetic response to the Gilgamesh epic by Hillary Major. A Glossary of Proper Names and a Selected Bibliography are also included.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Norton Critical Edition of "The Epic of Gilgamesh" is a fairly recent translation of what is currently the oldest known epic. The epic was translated by Benjamin R. Foster. The book also includes "The Sumerian Gilgamesh Poems", translated by Douglas Frayne, and "The Hittite Gilgamesh", translated by Gary Beckman. In addition, there is "The Gilgamesh Letter", several essays discussing the epic, and an Introduction section which helps those who are new to the Epic

with their first reading. The translation uses the "standard version" associated with Sin-leqe-unninni as its base, and supplements it with parts from other versions where there are gaps. There are also comments in the text to help the reader follow the passages easier. An area of weakness of this book was in the area of editorial comments. For example, Mr. Foster states in the introduction: "There is no evidence that The Epic of Gilgamesh began as an oral narrative performed by bards or reciters and coalesced into a written text only later. In fact, the poem as we now have it shows many signs of having been a formal, written, literary work composed and perhaps performed for well-educated people, especially scholars and members of a royal court." This is in sharp contrast with other opinions which I have read regarding the origins of the Epic. While it may be that there is no conclusive proof one way or another, there clearly is some evidence to support the theory that it did begin as an oral narrative, just as there is evidence that it may not have. If Mr. Foster completely disregards the evidence on the other side of the argument, then one is left to wonder if there are other "facts" provided by the editor that are equally suspect.

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