

Masterpieces of World Literature

IN DIGEST FORM

Original title: MASTERPLOTS

Second Series

EDITED BY

Frank N. Magill

WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF
DAYTON KOHLER AND STAFF



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PREFACE

THIS Second Series is an extension of the original *Masterpieces of World Literature in Digest Form*: a comprehensive collection of sequence-by-sequence plot stories from world literature, selected for popular as well as classic appeal. Summaries of 500 additional well-known literary works are included in this later series, condensations again having been prepared with the able assistance of a qualified and experienced staff. This brings to 1,010 the number of summaries in the complete series.

Planned as a further aid to busy people, the same ready-reference format as that employed in the First Series has been retained. Information concerning type of work, authorship, type of plot, time of plot, locale, and date of first publication or presentation is clearly given. The principal characters and their relationships are listed separately for quick reference, a feature which seems to be especially well received. Again critical comments have been confined to a critique, so that an element of cohesion is achieved in relating the plot story which otherwise would not be attained. Stories are arranged alphabetically by title, and there are two listings of the contents—a title index at the beginning, an author index at the end.

Masterpieces of World Literature in Digest Form is not the usual "reprint"; all the material it contains was written expressly for this book. As in the First Series, these résumés include no quotations from the works on which they are based, and no attempt has been made to re-create an original author's style. Summaries average about 1,500 words each but reach a length of 2,500 words in some cases.

Of major concern was the selection of the list of titles to be included in this new series. Titles for the First Series were chosen after consultations with scores of teachers of English and other qualified individuals. However, it was recognized that in limiting the original list to 510 titles, works had to be omitted which deserved attention and compared favorably with those retained on the list. This new series makes it possible to reinstate desirable titles which were crowded off the previous list and to encompass a wider area of literary achievement generally.

Consultations with specialists here and abroad have resulted in the inclusion of titles which are important but which are often overlooked when standard book lists are compiled. For example, a number of excellent but

PREFACE

little-known Spanish and Latin-American works are represented, some of which have been translated into English only recently.

Interests and requirements vary, but almost any worth-while literary work will influence in some measure the writings which follow it and for this reason, a number of titles of historical significance were chosen regardless of whether they still enjoy a wide audience today. On the other hand, books written during the past fifty years usually are of greater interest to most readers today than are the works of earlier writers. Consequently, more than a third of the space in *Masterpieces of World Literature in Digest Form* is devoted to twentieth-century titles—368 of the 1,010 entries, to be exact.

As might be expected, novels predominate in the complete collection, accounting for more than two-thirds of the entries. Summaries of 682 novels, 215 dramas, 113 poems and miscellaneous categories appear in the entire series. But in the Second Series, a shift of emphasis away from the novel and in the direction of the older literary forms will be noted. Dramas account for only 51 of the titles in the First Series but 164 are included in the Second Series.

Many authors represented in the original series are also included in the Second Series, though more than half of the total number of authors in this later series are new to *Masterpieces of World Literature in Digest Form*. Two hundred eighty-nine authors are represented in the First Series; 325 authors have titles appearing in the Second Series. One hundred three of this number also appear in the First Series; 222 appear only in the Second Series. Thus, a total of 511 different authors are represented in the complete collection, 31 of whom are winners of the Nobel Prize in Literature. This wide author representation assures a broad range for the *Masterpieces of World Literature in Digest Form* series and adds much to its reference value.

As was the case during the preparation of the earlier series, the co-operation of certain authors, publishers, agents, and literary trustees was requested in connection with the work on the Second Series. Again, my requests were generously granted and I wish to acknowledge with thanks the assistance received from these sources. Copyright notices and credit lines appear as footnotes accompanying the appropriate titles.

Also, I wish to acknowledge with sincere thanks the able and cheerful assistance received from the many members of the staff engaged in compiling this set. Story Editor Dayton Kohler, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, whose work in editing individual stories has been so outstanding, is well aware of my appreciation for his performance. Others, too, have rendered invaluable service and I am most grateful to all for their aid.

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Finally, I should like to express my appreciation to the many individuals who have taken time to convey in writing their favorable reactions to the First Series. I trust that this new series also will be of assistance and value to those concerned with the teaching, the study, or the sheer enjoyment of the world's fine literature.

FRANK N. MAGILL

*Masterpieces
of World Literature*
IN DIGEST FORM

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