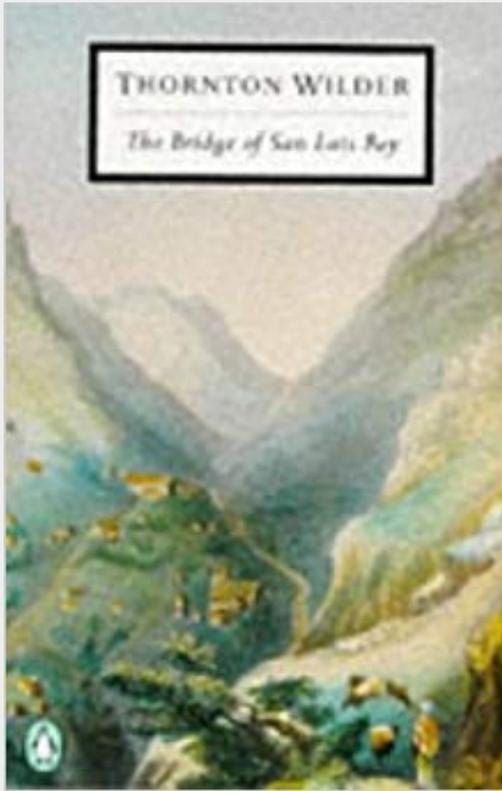


The Bridge of San Luis Rey (Twentieth Century Classics) by Thornton Wilder



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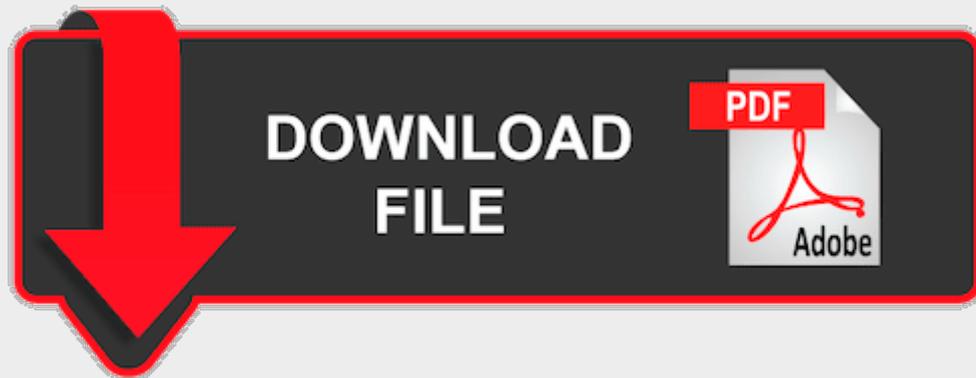
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Reviews of the The Bridge of San Luis Rey (Twentieth Century Classics) by Thornton Wilder

1. Fesho

This novel remains one of my favorite reads. Profound in its inquiry of

'why' and specific in the depiction of human nature, this work places readers inside its principal characters without romanticizing them or damning them. If readers stay with this book, then they will understand why the closing words have continued to bring solace to those who have suffered inexplicable loss ever since its publication. Wilder has written a "perfect" narrative; read this work and experience the sheer majesty of a true wordsmith and storyteller.

2. Dukinos

Although I am familiar with Thornton Wilder's plays, this is the first novel of his that I have read. I will be reading more! "The Bridge of San Luis Rey" has been turning over and over in my mind since I finished it a few days ago. I still don't know what to fully say about it. Essentially the novel is asking if there is a divine providence in our lives, or is it merely the acts of our own will. I have read reviews that argue vehemently that the book comes decisively down in one camp or the other. I am not sure I agree. I think Mr. Wilder is saying that regardless of whether it is human or divine, love is the central theme that makes life bearable, important, and worth toiling through. Whether the love is divinely or humanly inspired is beside the point. I have to say, I find that idea very uplifting.

The style of the text is a little difficult for the casual reader to get into, but once you have read four or so pages you adapt to the manner in which Wilder composed this piece, and it flows very nicely. I read that Wilder worked very hard to make the narrator of the text a detached persona, one not emotionally involved in the story. This works wonderfully for the novel, because the fate that befalls five characters when a bridge collapses and sends them all plummeting to their deaths is delivered with a very dry, matter of fact, and objective sense of the event. The details of their personal lives are revealed to the reader in much the same manner, and a big theme of the novel comes through as a result. The emotions that we feel towards these characters as we get to know more and more about them are constructs of our own personal reactions to them, and they are varied reader to reader because of what we bring to the book ourselves. "The Bridge of San Luis Rey" seems to be saying that human life is valued in the eyes of the individuals who have some emotional connection to it, and that is much more important than trying to place an individual life in the great cosmic scheme of things. The greatest value in our lives is in how we are loved by others seems to be what Wilder is saying in the very ambiguous, and very brilliant, final ten lines of the novel.

Or he could be saying something completely different. That is the goal.

What we as individual readers bring to this text is what gives it meaning. To that point, this novel is a favorite of two friends of mine, one an avid atheist and hater of religion, and one as devout and evangelical as they come. Again, what we bring to this work seems to define it, and Wilder wanted that to happen.

The current edition has a lovely forward by Russell Banks, and some great information about Wilder and his work on the text. Both are helpful in making the experience of reading this novel even richer.

"The Bridge of San Luis Rey" has shoved its way into my top five list. It is perfect for discussion and book clubs. The Pulitzer Prize it won in 1928 was well deserved.

3. Steel_Blade

It is strange...the picture and headline are not what I ordered nor what I received. I did, however, receive what I thought I ordered - a good thing. Fortunately, mine is a cloth hard cover printed in 1928 and looks nothing like the Heritage edition of 1976. I am anxious to read the story that is printed on the thick pages. The story is engrossing, the illustrations are mesmerizing, and I am proud to be the caretaker of this 90yo tome.

I discovered, buried in the pages, a stamp from the Joseph Horne Co - Book Shop Pittsburgh (now Macy's).

4. Murn

The Bridge of San Luis Rey is a work that must be read more than one time, because it changes over time. Not that the text or the words or the narrative change, but we as readers and people change over time. Wilder strikes at the core of what it means to be human which is why this work in particular has conquered the test of time.

This particular edition is interesting because of the additional commentary and history that is included. If there was any disappointment in this edition, it was the absence of illustrations that were included in the

original edition as filler to justify the retail price. I look forward to my next re-read of this timeless treasure.

5. fr0mTheSkY

Wilder's book was one of the first good books I ever read, years ago, and I have always regarded it as unique, clever, original and compelling. Were I more widely read, I might find that it is not some of those things as much as I'd thought, but the idea of describing the tragedy at the bridge and then going back and tracing how the victims all came to be there struck me as very creative. As I re-read it even now, I find myself wishing that each character would either turn back or hurry and get there sooner. In many personal and observed events over the years, I have wished the same.

6. Cherry The Countess

This is one of those books I was sure I must have read at some time, but hadn't .. so I ordered the cheapest copy available. No surprises there but it's completely readable .. and magnificent .. and no wonder it got the Pulitzer Prize that year. I'll be going back to the seller for a Very Good .. this is a keeper.

7. Goltigor

This book was selected for our community reading project, The Big Read. Although it is very old (1927), I had never heard of it. After I began reading it, I could easily see why it has stood the test of time. It is a moral fable which is as relevant today, if not more so, as it was when the book

was written. The book is very short and can be read in one sitting. I did not want to put it down. It has now become one of my favorites!

8. This is a compelling story about the lives of people, unfortunate enough to have been on the Bridge when it spontaneously collapsed. Thornton Wilder's brief novel is worth the read. The opening and closing chapters are elegant. The middle character-driven chapters are less compelling. All in all, it is a read worth the time.

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