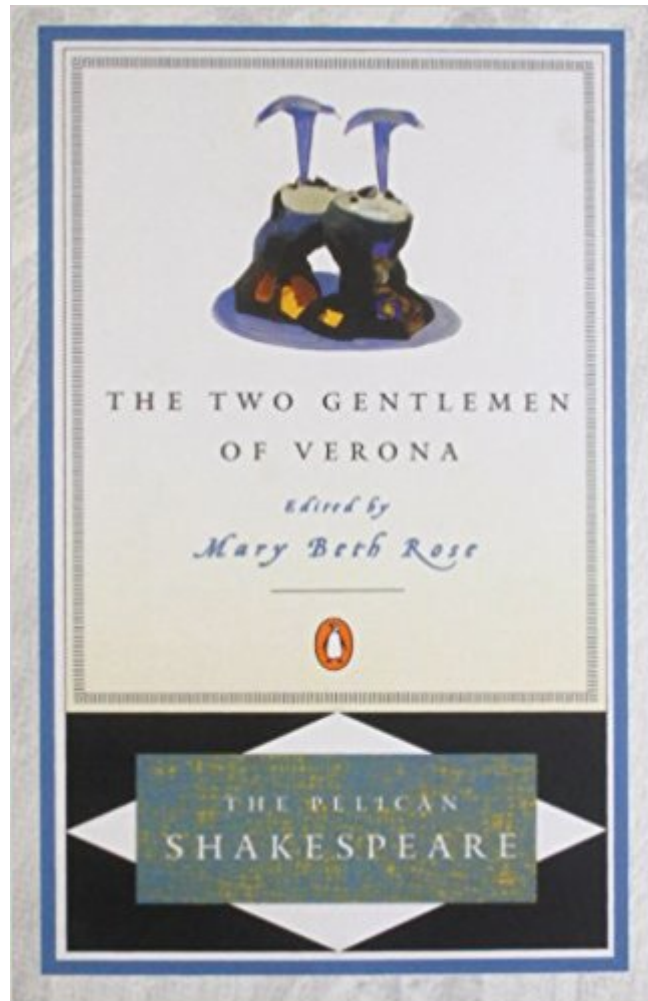


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The Two Gentlemen Of Verona (The Pelican Shakespeare)



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Customer Reviews

Although few would claim that *Two Gentlemen of Verona* is one of Shakespeare's greatest plays, it is well worth reading in order to serve as a reference for the best of his romantic comedies. In essence, *Two Gentlemen of Verona* gives you a measuring stick to see the brilliance in the best works. The play has the first of Shakespeare's many brave, resourceful and cross-dressing

heroines, Julia. Shakespeare always used his fools and clowns well to make serious statements about life and love, and to expose the folly of the nobles. Two Gentlemen of Verona has two very fine comic scenes featuring Launce. In one, he lists the qualities of a milk maid he has fallen in love with and helps us to see that love is blind and relative. In another, he describes the difficulties he has delivering a pet dog to Silvia on his master, Proteus', behalf in a way that will keep you merry on many a cold winter's evening. The story also has one of the fastest plot resolutions you will ever find in a play. Blink, and the play is over. This nifty sleight of hand is Shakespeare's way of showing that when you get noble emotions and character flowing together, things go smoothly and naturally. The overall theme of the play develops around the relative conflicts that lust, love, friendship, and forgiveness can create and overcome. Proteus is a man who seems literally crazed by his attraction to Silvia so that he loses all of his finer qualities. Yet even he can be redeemed, after almost doing a most foul act. The play is very optimistic in that way. I particularly enjoy the plot device of having Proteus and Julia (pretending to be a page) playing in the roles of false suitors for others to serve their own interests. Fans of Othello will enjoy these foreshadowings of Iago.

I was drawn to this play after watching "Shakespeare in Love." Early in the movie lines are recited from the play that are quite entrancing: "What is light, if Silvia be not seen? // What is joy, if Silvia be not by? // Unless it be to think that she is by // And feed upon the shadow of perfection. // Except I be by Silvia in the night, // There is no music in the nightingale; // Unless I look upon Silvia in the day, // There is no day for me to look upon." Alas, these words from Act III, and the song in Act IV, ("Who is Silvia? What is she, // That all our swains commend her?") are the highlights of a play that most critics place at or near the bottom of the Shakespeare canon. The play is a comedy and therefore a love story, but the focus is on the friendship of two men--two buddies as it were--as in the plot of a Paul Newman/Robert Redford movie. Also, the heroine is not Silvia but Julia. The buddies are "The Two Gentlemen of Verona" "Proteus and Valentine. Proteus loves Julia and she loves him, while Valentine is destined to fall in love with Silvia. This being a comedy, Proteus falls for Silvia too, and Julia must disguise herself as a boy to win him back. If you're familiar with Shakespeare's comedies, girls disguised as boys is often part of the plot, but it was with this play where cross-dressing began. Valentine goes to Milan to be a tutor in the world. Soon after, Proteus follows to meet up with him in the court of Milan. There, Proteus forgets about his love for Julia and falls head-over-heels in love with Valentine's girl Silvia, and to entice her affections proceeds to disparage his best friend. Nice guy, huh? This betrayal leads to Valentine's exile from the court. Determined to win him back, Julia dresses as a boy and sets off to find him.

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