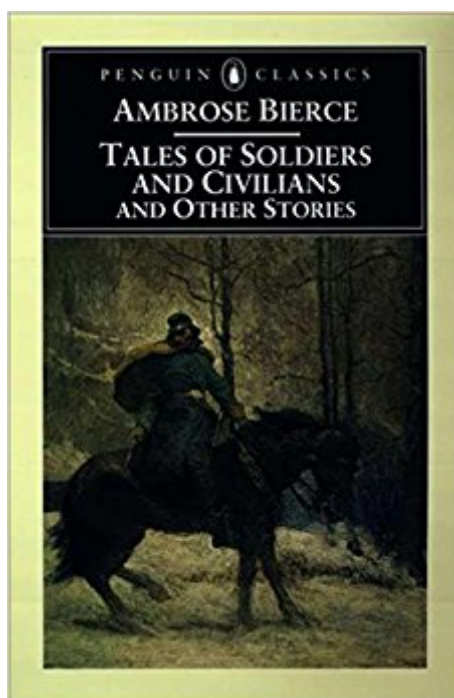


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Tales Of Soldiers And Civilians: And Other Stories (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

Questing after Pancho Villa's revolutionary forces, Ambrose Bierce rode into Mexico in 1913 and was never seen again. He left behind him the Devil's Dictionary and a remarkable body of short fiction. This new collection gathers some of Bierce's finest stories, including the celebrated Civil War fictions 'An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge' and 'Chickamauga', his macabre masterpieces, and his tales of supernatural horror. Reminiscent of Poe, these stories are marked by a sardonic humour and a realistic study of tense emotional states. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators. From the Trade Paperback edition.

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Customer Reviews

Ambrose Bierce's collected stories, mostly of the Civil War but also of peacetime America in the last half of the 19th Century, are amazing not least because of the fact that he was one of the first to write in this genre. No doubt much of his inspiration for his Civil War stories were based upon his own observations as an officer in the Union Army while other stories may have been ones he came up with while living on the Pacific coast. Ghostly occurrences, strange machines, unexplained episodes, monsters... Bierce seems to have lived in a strange world of shadows all his own. It is somehow fitting that Bierce simply disappeared in the early 20th Century. Great book. Definitely a classic.

I always wanted to get around to reading Ambrose Bierce. Known as an iconoclast and an excellent satirist, Bierce is best known for his Devil's Dictionary. He's also known for the disappearing act he pulled in Mexico in 1913. I decided to give this short anthology a chance. If I liked his stories, I figured I'd buy some more of his writings. I will be reading more of his writings. The recent movie The Blair Witch Project has brought scary stories back into vogue. After reading this book, I realized you can make a direct connection from this film to Ambrose Bierce. The connection would pass through Stephen King and H.P. Lovecraft along the way. I've seen things in both of these writers that could have been lifted directly out of one of Bierce's stories. In Bierce's story, "The Damned Thing", with its talk about colors that can and can't be seen, I could have sworn I was reading Lovecraft. Bierce is a master at quick twists and shocking violence, and delivers scares fast and furious. I got chills with several of these short stories, which certainly makes for good horror reading. The book gives the reader a sample of Bierce's short stories. Most of the stories are tied around American Civil War themes, which is no surprise as Bierce served in the Union army during that conflict. His experiences gave him the necessary frame of reference to write these dark stories. And when I say dark, I mean DARK! Some of these tales will make your jaw drop. The violence in them is extremely unsettling. Chickamauga and Oil of Dog are sickening, describing blown open heads and dead babies in graphic detail. Did I mention Bierce's prose? Some of the best you'll read. His prose is so amazing that I found myself rereading some of his passages just so I could make sure I was getting the full meaning. It is that rich and textured. It's also extremely funny in places. In the introduction it is written that Bierce lived in England for several years and was embraced by the English, who are masters not only of the language, but also insults. I'm not surprised when I look at how he writes. He can pen an insult that would bring tears of joy to an Englishman's eyes. Finally, Bierce's stories show incredible depth for the short story format. He ridicules false courage, irony, lawyers, and even unions in the story, "The Revolt of the Gods". I highly recommend that anyone

not familiar with Ambrose Bierce give this book a read. It reads fast and you'll laugh and be shocked within the space of one page. Good stuff.

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