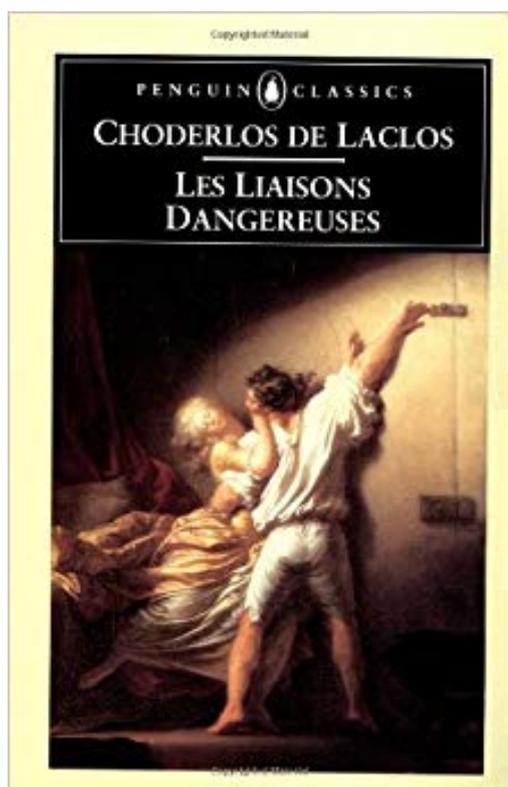


Les Liaisons Dangereuses (Penguin Classics) by Pierre Choderlos de Laclos, P. W. K. Stone



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An epistolary novel chronicles the cruel seduction of a young girl by two ruthless, eighteenth-century aristocrats



Reviews of the Les Liaisons Dangereuses (Penguin Classics) by Pierre Choderlos de Laclos, P. W. K. Stone

Cargahibe

The Vicomte de Valmont and the Marquise de Merteuil are both focused on getting their pleasure wherever they can get them.

I couldn't believe this book was written in 1780s as I felt scandalized reading it now, so I can't imagine what it was like for people reading it then! It took a bit to get to know the characters, but

once they were all straightened out in my mind I really enjoyed the story. And once you have the personalities ingrained, as a reader you really get to enjoy the satire present in every one of the letters. The only reason I gave a 4 instead of 5 stars as the ending was a bit lame. It was to tidy as all those who were naughty got 'justice', which I found to be a bit cliché. Still, this is a classic that I am extremely happy I took the time to read. I would highly recommend. I promise you won't be bored.

Bragis

Based on the 1782 novel by Choderlos de Laclos and written for the stage by Christopher Hampton, *LES LIAISONS DANGEREUSES* debuted in England in 1985 and had several different productions, with most of the original cast, before a successful run in London's West End. The play opened in New York in 1987, where it ran 149 performances. It was subsequently adapted for the screen as the 1988 *DANGEROUS LIAISONS*, a critically lauded film starring Glenn Close, John Malkovich, and Michelle Pfeiffer. The play requires a cast of six women and four men. It is set in the 1700s, not long before the French Revolution, and as such it requires period costumes and sets. The play is performed in two acts, each with nine scenes; the set changes with each scene.

The play concerns the relationship between La Marquise de Merteuil and La Vicomte de Valmont, the former a highly respected widow, the latter a raffish bachelor, both well known in the society of their era. They are discrete sociopaths who conceal their behavior behind a mask of manners, manipulating others into sexual relationships and then behaving with vicious cruelty toward their lovers.

When the play begins, Merteuil asks Valmont to seduce and thoroughly debauch Cecile Volanges, who has recently left convent school and will be married to a highly respectable who demands a virgin as a bride. Valmont declines; he is pursuing La Presidente de Tourvel, a woman noted for her high moral standards, and hopes to force to fall in love with him, and have an affair with him, in spite of her religious beliefs. These two plot lines cross as the play progresses, and the relationships between Merteuil, Valmont, and their prey spiral into a series of increasingly vicious games—that come to a climax when Merteuil and Valmont square off against each other, each determined to destroy the other.

LES LIAISONS DANGEREUSES is in a certain sense as formal as a delicate, meticulously performed minuet. It has a certain beauty that highlights the nastiness of its leading characters, whose extreme behavior outstrip every subsequent melodrama right down to present day. It is both funny and awful, attractive and repellent. The script is intricate, and requires expert performers and artful designers under the leadership of a gifted director. It is also a script that reads as well on the page as it plays on the stage—and which will likely prompt readers to seek out the original novel.

GFT, Amazon Reviewer

Tinavio

Five stars to Pierre Choderlos de Laclos for his brilliant book, but the text in this edition is ridiculously small. As a college student in my twenties, my eyesight is by no means failing, yet I feel that the font is so unreasonably tiny that reading this book is an actual painful experience. The other typographical problem here is that each letter starts on a new page, leaving huge gaps of white space. Firstly, this is not aesthetically pleasing. In addition, there's not really a need for this wasted space, which could have been better put to use in making the text bigger.

Alsalar

That is one of Oscar Wilde's many famous quotes, and if it was true, then Oscar would have been delighted to meet the main characters of *LES LIAISONS DANGEREUSES*. I certainly was.

The Marquise de Merteuil and the Vicomte de Valmont are wicked, possibly evil, and yet (and this can be attributed to Laclos's literary genius) they will probably become the characters you end up rooting for. Laclos, during his life, continued to insist that this novel was written for instructional purposes, a sort of this-could-happen-to-you type thing, but I'm not so easily fooled. Laclos, throughout the story, points out which characters are good and upstanding or plainly innocent

(Tourvel, Rosemonde, Volanges) but he really wants you to hate these characters, and he uses the subtle language in their letters to achieve this. On the other hand, he makes the 'bad' characters (Valmont, Merteuil) more charming using the same technique. In other words, I believe that Laclos was trying to test his readers' principles. You know that what the Vicomte and the Marquise are doing is wrong... but you can't help wanting them to succeed and get away with it. You are bending your own morals because--while their victims are annoying and gullible--you find them to be witty, clever, and charming. And these are just fictional characters. What would happen if you met such people in real life?, Laclos seems to be asking.

Clever though they may be, Valmont and Merteuil eventually reach a point in their twisted game where they cannot control it, and though they were once unholy allies, they become sworn enemies out of spite. They have already ruined so many other people, and now the time has come to ruin each other. [SPOILER WARNING] However, Merteuil, probably the more wicked of the two, gets away with her life, which is more than can be said for Valmont. There is even a note in the back of the book which suggests that she even overcame her deformities (caused by smallpox) and continued her way of life in Amsterdam. [END SPOILERS] They are not the only ones to suffer. Their victims are all brought down by their scheme, in different ways and in varying degrees of disaster. Again, Laclos uses his deceptive writing skill to make it seem like these characters deserved their fates because of their stupidity or naivete, without actually saying this at all. The reader ends up feeling worse for Valmont and Merteuil, who undoubtedly deserved their punishments. It is almost impossible to describe what Laclos has done in a review. You must read the actual novel in order to feel the sheer genius in it, the way he conveys meaning between the lines, without actually writing anything out to that effect. It really is like nothing I've ever seen before.

If I could give this masterpiece more than five stars, I would. This is the art of literature at its finest, and Laclos will have you under his spell the whole way through.

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