

Speak for the Dead *by* Margaret Yorke



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Reviews of the *Speak for the Dead* *by* Margaret Yorke

Goldfury

Margaret Yorke's novels are always character studies of everyday people whose lives are expertly woven together into a tapestry of psychological detail. We get to know certain characters rather intimately, others less so, though the end result is typically quite absorbing. Her work is similar to Ruth Rendell's in many ways, though the actual prose style is even "plainer" than Ms. Rendell's, at times coolly matter-of-fact as it explores an economically terse documentary approach. It is as though the author is "reporting" the story as it unfolds, without inserting any hyperbole or histrionics.

I found SPEAK FOR THE DEAD unusually compelling, even by Yorke standards. Within a chapter or two, you are drawn into the story, especially because of Carrie, one of the central characters. The author begins to unwind numerous threads as the book begins, each of which we follow with great

interest throughout the course of the book as these disparate threads gradually intersect and intertwine.

A sense of prolonged and unaddressed injustice hangs like a cloud around the story. A murder from seven years earlier still haunts the proceedings, and the ramifications of this murder eventually insinuate their way into the lives of nearly everyone we meet in the novel. Among the various characters there are a wide range of personality types, some "normal," at least one clearly amoral, some guilt-ridden and tormented, some brusquely oblivious to any darkness surrounding their choices. One major character, Carrie, is living her life on the fringes of acceptable behavior yet is essentially a strong and endearing person. There are plenty of people to choose from here -- surely at least one of them will fascinate you.

It has almost a classical sense of structure and a kind of Shakespearean tragedy to it as it unfolds. There is an atmosphere of impending consequences and the author expertly shows us how the past can really haunt the present. It's a good read, with considerable momentum and more than a few surprises. The various threads of the story all held interest for me, skillfully alternating and unfolding alongside each other, eventually all merging skillfully into an interconnected fabric where the lives and fates of everyone concerned are affected in some way by both the past and present events.

There may be no "fireworks" in the writing, but it has the kind of quiet understated elegance of language that subtly draws you in, and rewards you for taking the time. At times it feelsdd surprisingly like a fable or some kind of "morality play," thanks in part to the emphasis on the interior processes within the minds of several of the main characters. If you've never read any Margaret Yorke, this wouldn't be a bad place to start.

Morad

I will probably never get to visit England, but I can almost smell and taste it when I read a book by Margaret Yorke. She is genius when it comes to characterization of all things British -- at least in my minds eye.

This little novel is no different than most of her work, in that it weaves a tantalizing tale of deceit and murder. The plot is this: Gordon kills his first wife, his small children go live with their maternal grandparents. He lies about murder and gets off with 7 years manslaughter. Carrie, very young and blond, who has a larcenous streak marries Gordon when he gets out. Nicholas, a young innocent college type falls in love with Carrie. His grandmother is concerned. Gordon's parents are so quirky, among other strange things, his mother tries to defect to Russia. Gordon's ex-father-in-law hires a P.I. to find Gordon after his release. Fill in a lot of blanks and a great story emerges.

This book was written over 20 years ago, but like the others Ms Yorke has penned, they are more or less timeless. If your taste runs to the small English village suspense filled encounters with interesting twists and turns, with a couple of neat surprises, pick up something by Margaret Yorke.

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