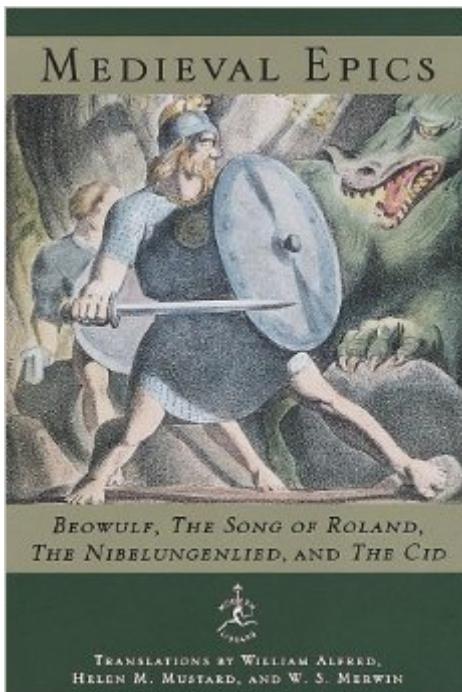


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Medieval Epics: Beowulf, The Song Of Roland, The Nibelungenlied, And The Cid (The Modern Library Of The World's Best Books)



Synopsis

"The first great literary works of a culture are its epic chronicles, those that create simple hero-figures about whom the imagination of a nation can crystallize," observed V. S. Pritchett. Medieval Epics presents acclaimed translations of epic legends from four Western cultures.---Beowulf is the foundation of English literature. It celebrates the courage and leadership of the mythical Anglo-Saxon warlord in his battles with supernatural monsters. Hailed by John Gardner as "poetry of the highest order of intelligence and aesthetic sophistication . . . the greatest poem in Old English," Beowulf here was translated by William Alfred of Harvard.---The Nibelungenlied, in a version rendered by critic and academic Helen M. Mustard, endures as a remarkable fusion of history and poetry that is a vital component of German literature. Goethe maintained that knowledge of the work constituted an integral part of the country's education. Indeed, The Nibelungenlied later inspired Wagner's four-opera Ring cycle.---Also included in this edition are Pulitzer Prize-winning poet W. S. Merwin's translations of The Song of Roland, a chanson de geste extolling chivalric ideals in the France of Charlemagne, and The Poem of the Cid, the celebrated epic of Castilian Spain. "Both are the first great literary works to be written in their respective languages," noted Pritchett. "The Song of Roland is animated by the crusading spirit and fortified by national and religious propaganda. . . . [In] Merwin's translation of The Poem of the Cid . . . the Champion now stands clearly and firmly on the dusty soil of Castile and we can know for what solid reasons he became the legendary national hero. . . . We can see a myth being used, and why it was used. . . . Such epics are examples of fully realized, propagandist art."The Modern Library has played a significant role in American cultural life for the better part of a century. The series was founded in 1917 by the publishers Boni and Liveright and eight years later acquired by Bennett Cerf and Donald Klopfer. It provided the foundation for their next publishing venture, Random House. The Modern Library has been a staple of the American book trade, providing readers with affordable hardbound editions of important works of literature and thought. For the Modern Library's seventy-fifth anniversary, Random House redesigned the series, restoring as its emblem the running torchbearer created by Lucian Bernhard in 1925 and refurbishing jackets, bindings, and type, as well as inaugurating a new program of selecting titles. The Modern Library continues to provide the world's best books, at the best prices.

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