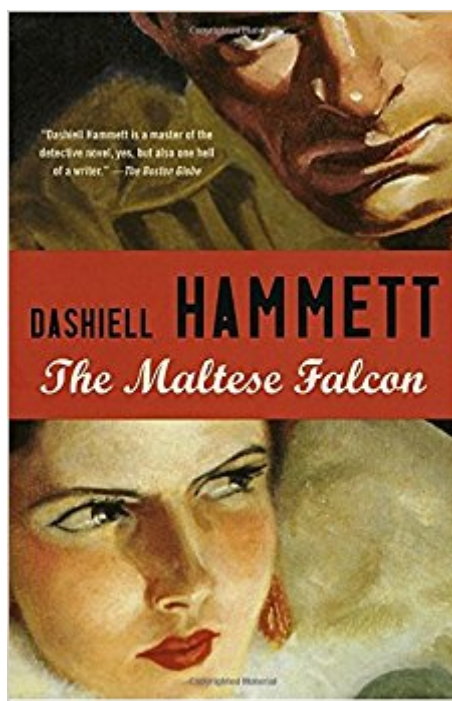


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The Maltese Falcon



Synopsis

A treasure worth killing for. Sam Spade, a slightly shopworn private eye with his own solitary code of ethics. A perfumed grafter named Joel Cairo, a fat man name Gutman, and Brigid O'Shaughnessy, a beautiful and treacherous woman whose loyalties shift at the drop of a dime. These are the ingredients of Dashiell Hammett's coolly glittering gem of detective fiction, a novel that has haunted three generations of readers.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars See all reviews (548 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

Alongside Raymond Chandler's Marlowe, Dashiell Hammett's Sam Spade is one of the most famous detectives from American literature. These two writers define what we know as the noir literature. Personally speaking, I found it more pleasant to read Hammett than Chandler. Both writers are great, and deliver the best in the prose, character development, settings and all, but I found "The Maltese Falcon" more interesting than "The Big Sleep" and "Farewell, my Lovely". Hammett's prose is straightforward. He doesn't waste time with digressions and many descriptions -- only the essential. As a consequence, his novel is packed with action and mystery. It is not a surprise that this author writes with so much authority -- he used to be a private detective. Most of the book --if not the whole narrative --feels like getting inside information. Hammett's style became a paramount in this genre and he has a major influence on many contemporary writers -- e.g. James Ellroy, Jeffery Deaver, and the French Jean-Christophe Grange among others. Hammett's prose is filled with witty observations on the American way of life -- mostly on the violence and corruption that were permeating the American Society. Contrary to what many

contemporary readers may wrongly assume, the older mystery novel is not as prudish and conservative as it may sound. Hammett's prose is more related to the 20s than the 50s. And in that early period society was looser than after the McCarthyism. Therefore, "The Maltese Falcon" can be a grateful surprise to many readers -- who will find drink, drugs, sex and sexual orientation (the Cairo character's sexual orientation has been largely discussed since the book was published).

Why should anyone read THE MALTESE FALCON? The classic Bogart flick is a near-perfect rendition of Dashiell Hammett's tough-guy dialogue. Director John Huston cast the film so well, that it's impossible to imagine the characters any other way. And in all its twists and turns, the movie captures every nuance of Hammett's plot, and even adds to the mix. So, again: Why should anyone read THE MALTESE FALCON? The same reason why the movie is so watchable time after time; If you haven't read it, you don't know how good it is, and if you have read it, it's so good, you can't wait to read it again. In THE MALTESE FALCON, Hammett nails every element of the detective genre so precisely, so superbly, that it's a wonder anyone ever tried to write another detective novel after him. There are simply none better, a detective novel that goes beyond its pulp roots, and enters the realm of 'capital L' Literature. The plot, for those three people who are unaware, is as follows; Detective Sam Spade has unwittingly become a pawn in a bizarre game of chess. After his partner Miles is killed, he finds himself immersed in a convoluted plot involving a double-dealing moll, a sly fat man, a creepy small man, and a treasured statue of a bird that, if it exists, is worth unimaginable riches. But Spade is unwilling to be used in such a fashion, and starts to set himself up as a player in the scheme, all the while trying madly to figure out exactly what he should do. I have always believed, in the best of the genre, that the actual plot comes second to the characters, and FALCON is no exception. Hammett's Spade is a remarkable resourceful character, living by a code that even he may not truly believe in.

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