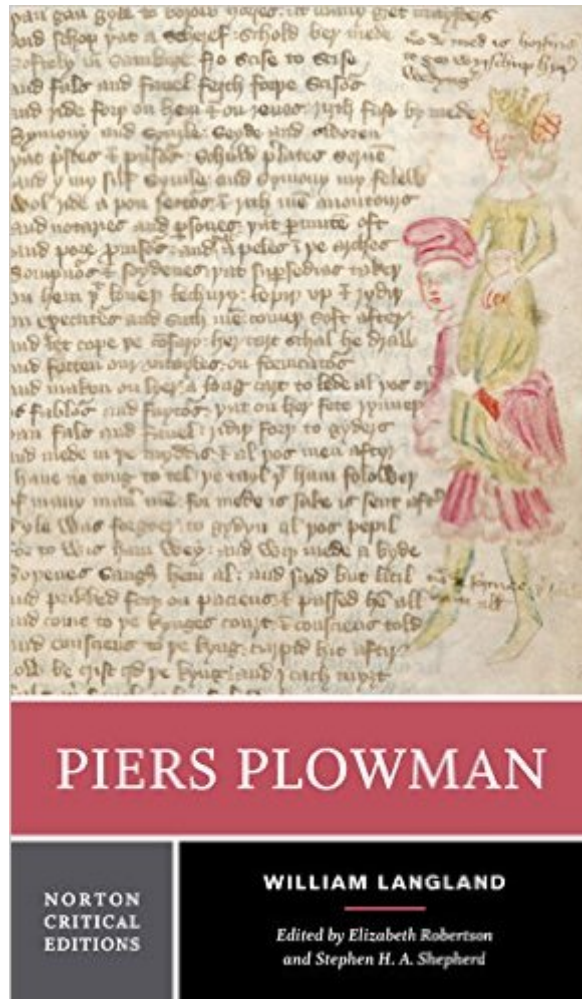


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Piers Plowman (Norton Critical Editions)



Synopsis

Piers Plowman is one of the most significant works of medieval literature. Astonishing in its cultural and theological scope, William Langland's iconoclastic masterpiece is at once a historical relic and a deeply spiritual vision, probing not only the social and religious aristocracy but also the day-to-day realities of a largely voiceless proletariat class. E. Talbot Donaldson's translation of the text has been selected for this Norton Critical Edition because of its skillful emulation of the original poem's distinct alliterative verse. Selections of the authoritative Middle English text are also included for comparative analysis. "Sources and Backgrounds" includes a large collection of contemporary religious and historical documents pertaining to the poem, including selections from the Douai Bible, accounts of the plague, and legal statutes. "Criticism" includes twenty interpretive essays by leading medievalists, among them E. Talbot Donaldson, George Kane, Jill Mann, Derek Pearsall, C. David Benson, and Elizabeth D. Kirk. A Glossary and Selected Bibliography are also included.

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Customer Reviews

Piers Plowman by William Langland. Edited by Elizabeth Robertson and Stephen H. A. Shepherd. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2006. Paperback, 644 pages. ISBN 0393975592
The Norton Critical Edition of Piers Plowman is, without doubt, one of the best editions of the poem that have ever appeared for readers who are new to Langland. Its great value lies in the fact that, besides giving the complete Middle English text of the B-version of this wonderful poem, it also

provides, on facing pages, the excellent Modern English translation of E. Talbot Donaldson. In this way, the poem is made available even to readers who may know little or no Middle English. Langland's English can be difficult and his allusions obscure, but most difficulties and obscurities are here easily resolved either by glancing across at the translation on the facing page or down at the useful footnotes which have been placed where they should be at the bottom of each page. Langland wrote his poem - and it was in his time an enormously popular poem - not for scholars or students (in which case it would have been written entirely in Latin) but for ordinary people like you and me. And the present edition has, with its Middle English text plus Modern English translation, provided us with everything the general reader really needs. But besides the actual texts of the poem, the publishers have generously provided almost 300 pages of supplementary material that the more studious will find useful: Sources and Backgrounds, Critical Essays, Selected Bibliography, etc.

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