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## Devil's Dictionary, The

*Ambrose Bierce*

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**Ambrose Bierce : Devil's Dictionary, The** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Devil's Dictionary, The:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A Work of GeniusBy Herr XWhile some of the entries are badly dated, others remain as true as the day they were written by the brilliantly cynical Bierce.For example:Idiot -- A member of a large and powerful tribe whose influence in human affairs has always been dominant and controlling. The Idiot's activity is not confined to any special field of thought or action, but "pervades and regulates the whole." He has the last word in everything; his decision is unappealable. He sets the fashions and opinion of taste, dictates the limitations of speech and circumscribes conduct with a dead-line.Required reading for anyone with a sense of humor.5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Bierce at his best!By TipsWithALipWarning: This dictionary isn't for the faint of heart or for those easily offended.If you can get past that, you're in for a real treat. Ambrose "Bitter" Bierce has constructed a dictionary from a particularly nefarious point-of-view, and it is hilarious! His word choices for his dictionary are clever and idiosyncratic, as are his uses of archaic words (even in his own time), his actual neologisms, and his accompanying poetry for words, all written by different, mysterious pseudonyms. He completely dismisses the letter "X" and refuses to put down any word beginning with that letter. Why? You'll see. But it is his definitions for his words that make this little volume a classic.A typical definition of one of the words in this dictionary usually begins with a staggeringly trenchant one-liner that, in just a few words, is as funny and cutting as any political cartoon you could see in any paper or any routine delivered by a comedian. These one-liners are the real gems of the book; they will stick in your head and make you laugh, often laughing at yourself or some cherished notion of yours. That is truly great satire, and folks, that is hard to find anywhere. These lines are so pithy and clever that they are much more

effective than an op-ed in any publication that drones on about some group or idea the journalist hates. Sometimes, you may have to read Bierce's definitions a few times to get the joke, but when you get it, it's always worth it. Some of these definitions are only pithy one-liners because to add anything more to them would be to try to improve on perfection. But if you want more, sometimes Bierce gives it to you in a wry, brief description of the word's origins (he has fun with etymologies, for sure) and history. And many times he will then slide into some wise and funny poetry using the word. This style of writing suits all types of readers; if you are of the "I only read the first line and then check my cell phone" generation, you'll be plenty happy with the first part of the definition. If you are not of that generation and enjoy further reading, it's often there as an added bonus. Another facet of the book that makes it stupendous to read even in our day is that Bierce shied away from talking about topical issues limited to his day in most cases and instead wrote definitions for humankind in general, and that makes this dictionary timeless. Humanity takes it in the shorts in this book, often in a sardonic yet funny way. And as with all truly great satire, the ones who take the punishment the most and hardest are the most powerful people in society (or the ones who think they are the most powerful in society). As a result, Bierce attacks with special bile politicians, financiers, bankers, titans of industry, and theologians. If you happen to be in one of these groups, chances are you may not like this book. But the rest of the 99% will. In terms of hilarious and cutting satire from great American writers, I can think only of Twain who was as mean, funny, and wise all at the same time. Bierce is an underappreciated writer. If you can get past that initial warning I gave you, please give this one a try. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Some gems. Great for dipping into every now and then. By Alex Bush "Corporation, n. An ingenious device for obtaining individual profit without individual responsibility." Just this line alone is worth the price of admission. Bierce is a cynical SOB, which I respect, and he offers both insights and chuckles for when I'm procrastinating at night when I should be working (like right now). Some of his references are a little bit dated, although that's to be expected for a book written in the age of steam. All in all, cute, smart, and witty, best in small doses. Makes for great quotes, though unless you have exceptional friends I doubt anyone will know what you're talking about.

Classic of American literature. New England. United States. Satire.