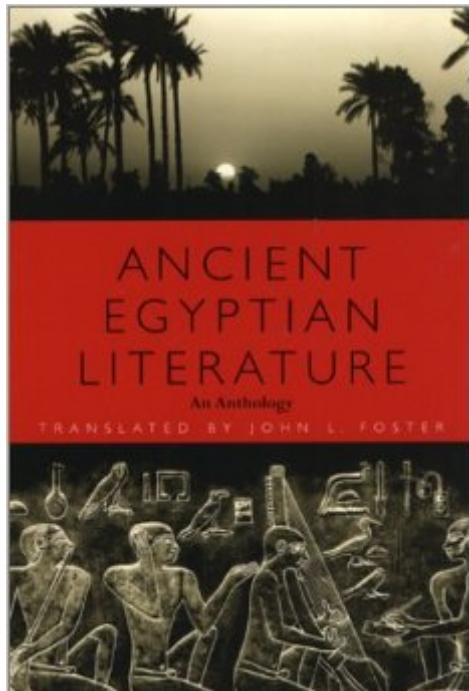


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Ancient Egyptian Literature: An Anthology



Synopsis

Poetry, stories, hymns, prayers, and wisdom texts found exquisite written expression in ancient Egypt while their literary counterparts were still being recited around hearth fires in ancient Greece and Israel. Yet, because of its very antiquity and the centuries during which the language was forgotten, ancient Egyptian literature is a newly discovered country for modern readers. This anthology offers an extensive sampling of all the major genres of ancient Egyptian literature. It includes all the texts from John Foster's previous book *Echoes of Egyptian Voices*, along with selections from his *Love Songs of the New Kingdom* and *Hymns, Prayers, and Songs: An Anthology of Ancient Egyptian Lyric Poetry*, as well as previously unpublished translations of four longer and two short poems. Foster's translations capture the poetical beauty of the Egyptian language and the spirit that impelled each piece's composition, making these ancient masterworks sing for modern readers. An introduction to ancient Egyptian literature and its translation, as well as brief information about the authorship and date of each selection, completes the volume.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I have enjoyed reading this anthology of ancient Egyptian literature translated by John Foster. The study of ancient Egyptian literature has come a long way since its early days, with de Rouge's publication for the tale "Two Brothers" in 1852, based on an ancient Egyptian papyri, which was acquired by Elizabeth d'Orbigny. In his well-written introduction, the author outlines his personal introduction as a graduate student at the University of Michigan to ancient Egyptian literature; and

he further indicates that he finished his work in American literature and modern poetry, and that by profession he taught English. He outlines the historical background for the study of ancient Egyptian literature. A major feature of this anthology is that it tends to be more of a "literary" vis a vis a more "literal" translation, while keeping the original ancient Egyptian writers' "presumed" intent in mind. I tend to think that the author seems to have been reasonably successful in producing a literary translation to a great extent. The book also includes the sources of the texts and a bibliography, which I tend to think, would be useful for the readers. I noted with interest the translation as compared with other recent publications of ancient Egyptian literature such as the three volumes on "Ancient Egyptian Literature" by M. Lichtheim, which tends to be more of a literal vis a vis literary translation. I have two observations to point out. The first is about maxim 1 of Ptahhotep, which advises against arrogance for those who attain knowledge. Ptahhotep admonishes the reader in the author's literary translation "more hidden than gems is the chiseled expression, yet found among slave girls grinding the grain".

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