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Thomas And Beulah (Carnegie Mellon Poetry Series)



Synopsis

A collection of poetry by Rita Dove.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Rita Dove's *Thomas and Beulah* is a fantastic story of two people's journey through life together. It is broken up into two sections: *Mandolin*, and *Canary in Bloom*. The first section is written through the eyes of Thomas and the second is from Beulah's perspective. What is fantastic about the way this book is written and organized is that all the poems are connected in sequence and tell a story. Unlike many of the books of poetry that I have read, I did not have to bounce back and forth from this book to my dictionary. Dove's approach to writing poetry is very straight-forward and from the heart. The book reads as if it was a personal memoir from both Thomas and Beulah. You can relate to the couple and really are drawn in by the imagery and metaphors that Dove uses. Pay attention to the use of wings, salt, fish, canary, feet, heart, music, yellow, flowers, and tears. All contribute in great deal to the depth of each poem. One of my favorite poems from this book is "Courtship, Diligence." In this poem, Beulah is listening to him play the same old mandolin that he has played for years. As she sits she imagines a life where she doesn't have to listen to the same old mandolin and see his same old yellow scarf. Thomas has no idea of her thoughts and is playing as well as he could to make her happy. This really made me think of past relationships and how one person could be very happy and try their best to please the one they love with what they are given. Yet,

sometimes no matter how hard one person tries, the other is just simply unhappy. The use of mandolin in this poem is just one example of Dove's imagery. When she is using mandolin, it is representing some feeling or stage in Thomas' life.

I really enjoyed this book because of the unconventional way it was written. I really admire Rita Dove's use of a series of short poems to tell a story. After reading Thomas's half of the book, I couldn't wait to read Beulah's half. The different ways that these two experience the same events, is wonderful. Every poem shows so much feeling; it makes the reader feel like part of what is going on. Once it was pointed out to me that certain symbols stay constant through the entire book, I appreciated the way it was written even more. It gives the reader something to grab onto and follow throughout the sets of narrative poems. In the poems, there is not a use of extremely difficult language. Instead, Rita Dove uses very simple language. The use of simpler words helps convey the time the events were taking place and the people whose point of view they are coming from. By this I mean that historically, because of racism, during these time period many African Americans where not even allowed an education. My favorite poem in the book would have to be "The Zeppelin Factory." In the first stanza, I love the use of the term "whale" to describe the air craft. It gives the image of this gigantic, lumbering piece of machinery. To me it also relates the hollow moan of a whale, to the moaning and creaking of the joints of the airship. The feelings of sadness in the first stanza, quickly translates to the second and third stanzas, as the airship floats out of control, and three people lose their lives. In the third stanza, the image of these tiny looking men falling is absolutely horrifying. It made me realize that I can't even imagine witnessing something so terrible.

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