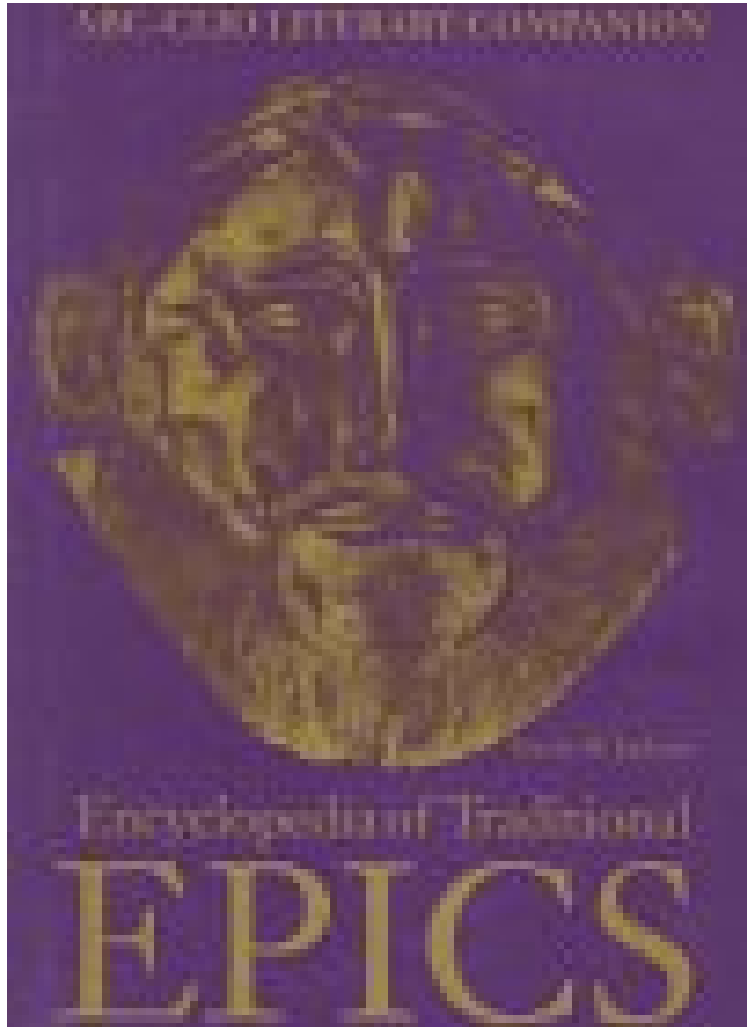


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Encyclopedia of Traditional Epics (ABC-CLIO Literary Companion)

Guida M. Jackson

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Guida M. Jackson : Encyclopedia of Traditional Epics (ABC-CLIO Literary Companion) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Encyclopedia of Traditional Epics (ABC-CLIO Literary Companion):

Identifies people, places, things, and myths found in the world's epic literature.

From Library JournalRanging widely in time (ancient to current), place, and culture, and extensively cross-referenced,

this volume covers Western classics and a host of exotic works-the Mayan Popol Vuh; North African Arabic Sirat al-Amira; Indian Mahabharata, Ramayana, and Alha; Japanese Nihongi Chronicles; Finnish Kalevala; Navaho Dine bahane; et al. Most of the entries are summaries of specific works (at times chapter by chapter, with quotations), principal figures, or major themes. An intelligent and readable introduction raises thoughtful questions about the past and present uses of epics, and the bibliography and appendixes (not seen) should prove helpful. The staggering scope of this work is a tribute to the author (Univ. of Houston). Browsers will find epics featuring women and black heroes, foreign cultural riches, and lesser-known Western masterpieces tempting them from page to page. Recommended for most libraries. Patricia Dooley, Newport, R.I. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist This is the most comprehensive reference work published on epics from cultures worldwide. Jackson is a lecturer in the English Foundations Department at the University of Houston. She defines epic as "a long narrative poem of grand scope, style, and theme that recounts the fantastic exploits of a legendary or historical figure or figures endowed with superhuman might and . . . epitomizes the character or ideals of a certain race, tribe, or nationality." The scope of Traditional Epics includes both oral or folk epics and epics in literary form evolved from oral tradition. Traditional Epics consists of approximately 1,500 entries on specific epics and epic cycles (Fenian Cycle, Beowulf), names of individuals (Hiawatha, Sinbad the Sailor), places (Asgard, Valhalla), and objects (Trojan Horse, Grail). The length of entries ranges from a few lines identifying a character (e.g., Minerva--"the Roman Goddess of handicrafts") to several pages devoted to major epics and concepts. Longer articles on the most important epics typically include the origin of the legend, when and where it was collected (including definitive collections), principal figures, analysis of the poetic pattern, relationship to historical characters and events, means of transmission, and a summary of the epic's content, often listed by chapter. Articles include parenthetical references to sources listed in a bibliography at the end of the encyclopedia. An examination of the geographic origins of the epics reveals the multicultural approach for which the work is valuable. Readers would expect to find entries for the best-known epics from the ancient world (Aeneid, Gilgamesh) and medieval Europe (Arthurian Legend); they will not be disappointed. They will also find entries for less familiar, but no less fascinating, epics from the Philippines (Hudhud), Hawaii (Pele), Vietnam (Lac Long Quang and Au Co), and American Indian groups such as the Brule Sioux (Uncegila's Seventh Spot). Appendixes list epics chronologically and geographically. Seventy black-and-white illustrations include photographs of art objects, pages from illustrated manuscripts, and contemporary depictions of epics. One of the most useful features of the Encyclopedia of Traditional Epics is its discussion of motifs that appear in epics worldwide, such as Flood, Hubris, and Abduction. These articles discuss the concept before proceeding to examples from different cultures. For example, Abandonment discusses Sargon I, Moses, Siegfried of the Norse legends, a Seneca myth, and the hero twins of the Maya Popol Vuh. Despite Jackson's attention to detail, the entries are written lucidly enough to be understood and enjoyed by the nonspecialist. The Encyclopedia of Traditional Epics is an essential purchase for academic and large public libraries. Libraries of secondary schools that address epics in their language or social studies curricula may also want to consider purchase. "The coverage of the epics is global and spans all time periods, lands, and faiths. Recommended for all academic and public libraries." - Choice "This is a handy reference work for all libraries." - American Libraries "It is just right for a general audience that lacks easy access to this sort of information, stored away as it is in diverse books and scholarly journals, few of which can boast the encyclopedia's multicultural scope." - Wilson Library Bulletin