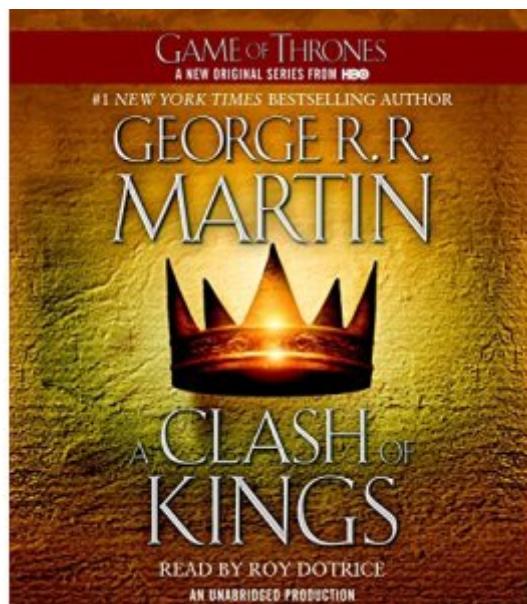


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A Clash Of Kings: A Song Of Ice And Fire, Book 2



Synopsis

FOR USE IN SCHOOLS AND LIBRARIES ONLY. Six separate factions vie for control of the realm of the late Lord Eddard Stark, while an ancient form of magic, an everlasting winter, and an unearthly army threaten to return. --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

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Customer Reviews

During one of those endless nights when I just couldn't put Clash of Kings down, I wondered: "Why aren't there more books like this?" George Martin has created one of those most deeply involving and satisfying series out there. In only two books, he has crafted real characters involved in the horrors of war. Many of the reviews below accurately describe the way that Martin creates characters of grey, rather than comic book black and whites. Many of the scenes in the book fit well with dark and somber lighting. This is not your daddy's fantasy novel. Martin's characters bring a more realistic spin on knighthood and war. Cersei describes it best to young Sansa when she destroys the young girl's romantic view of knights by remarking that knights are for killing, nothing more or less. And kill they do. The battle scenes are raw and unglamorous, like the opening scene from Saving Private Ryan. Its all very realistic and gritty and heck, it makes sense: what do you really think happens when a not-so-sharp sword is swung haphazardly at another person: I've never seen it firsthand, but I'm sure its not pretty. It may be an oxymoron to claim that a fantasy book can be realistic, but this series is: after seeing the battle scenes in Braveheart or Gladiator, I have a deeper understanding of the horrors of sword fighting in, say, the medieval times in English history.

Martin's story is realistic in the sense that it doesn't gloss over the horror and pain and terror of battles and the rage of the people who fight them. Martin's series is a hardcore fantasy adventure for adults. While other authors cater predominately to a younger fantasy audience, Martin seems to write for the "college and beyond" crowd (at 31, I'm well beyond). Sex scenes, like the battles, are not glamorous in the least. Whereas characters in Robert Jordan's Wheel of Time series constantly blush and stumble at the very thought of even kissing a girl, Martin's characters think lewd thoughts, perform graphic sex scenes, etc. Yes, it's not for all ages, or for every taste, but for those of us who are tired of the same old antiseptic stuff, Martin is a mature breathe of fresh air. Meanwhile, he continues to awe me with his story telling. The different kings are now in open conflict with each other. Whereas Game of Thrones focused on the Starks v. the Lannisters, in this installment, it seems as if the entire land is in turmoil, with no less than six kings fighting each other and attacking each other. The battles are terrific, including the climactic battle. (no spoilers here) One other note I feel compelled to make is that Martin has created strong and independent female characters in his series. People might assume, based on the reviews, that this is a male-dominated story. Nothing could be further from the truth. Martin spends as much time writing about the female characters (Sansa, Arya, Catelyn Stark) as the male characters, and the female characters rule (i.e. Cersei) and fight battles (I won't reveal any specifics on this point except to say that Martin introduces two female warriors.) Martin has created a real world, with all the vices of our own, and given all his characters life. Here's hoping that other writers take note.

First off, I'm a heavy duty fan of GRRM. I've read over a 100 different fantasy authors in my time (started at 12; I'm now 32). Took about 5 years off from the genre b/c I felt it was all getting too formulaic and cliched. Typical archetype character who turns out to be the missing heir or boy wonder who saves the world against the Dark Lord. So, when I came back to fantasy at the end of 1999, I read the usual: Goodkind, Jordan, etc. and then someone told me about GRRM and man, that was the kicker! Here are the reasons to choose GRRM. I've also listed the reasons not to choose him to make it fair b/c I know there are certain personalities who won't like this series:

WHY TO READ GRRM

(1) **YOU ARE TIRED OF FORMULAIC FANTASY:** good lad beats the dark lord against impossible odds; boy is the epitome of good; he and all his friends never die even though they go through great dangers . . . the good and noble king; the beautiful princess who falls in love with the commoner boy even though their stations are drastically different . . . the dark lord is very evil and almost one sided at times . . . you get the idea. After reading this over and over, it gets old.

(2) **YOU ARE TIRED OF ALL THE HEROES STAYING ALIVE EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE**

UNDER CONSTANT DANGER: this gets even worse where the author kills a main hero off but that person comes back later in the story. Or, a hero does die but magic brings him back. This sometimes carries to minor characters where even they may not die, but most fantasy authors like to kill them off to show that some risked the adventure and perished.(3) YOU ARE A MEDIEVAL HISTORY BUFF: this story was influenced by the WARS OF THE ROSES and THE HUNDRED YEARS WAR.(4) YOU LOVE SERIOUS INTRIGUE WITHOUT STUPID OPPONENTS: lots of layering; lots of intrigue; lots of clever players in the game of thrones. Unlike other fantasy novels, one side, usually the villain, is stupid or not too bright.(5) YOU ARE INTERESTED IN BIASED OPINIONS AND DIFFERENT TRUTHS: GRRM has set this up where each chapter has the title of one character and the whole chapter is through their viewpoint. Interesting tidbit is that you get their perception of events or truths. But, if you pay attention, someone else will mention a different angle of truth in the story that we rarely see in other novels. Lastly and most importantly, GRRM doesn't try to tell us which person is right in their perception. He purposely leaves it vague so that we are kept guessing.(6) LEGENDS: some of the most interesting characters are those who are long gone or dead. We never get the entire story but only bits and pieces; something that other fantasy authors could learn from to heighten suspense. Additionally, b/c the points of views are not congruent, we sometimes get different opinions.(7) WORDPLAY: if you're big on metaphors and description, GRRM is your guy. Almost flawless flow.(8) LOTS OF CONFLICT: all types, too; not just fighting but between characters through threats and intrigue.(9) MULTILAYERED PLOTTING; SUB PLOTS GALORE: each character has their own separate storyline; especially as the story continues and everyone gets scattered. This is one of the reasons why each novel is between 700-900 pages.(10) SUPERLATIVE VARIED CHARACTERS: not the typical archetypes that we are used to in most fantasy; some are gritty; few are totally evil or good; GRRM does a great job of changing our opinions of characters as the series progress. This is especially true of Jaime in book three.(11) REALISTIC MEDIEVAL DIALOGUE: not to the point that we can't understand it but well done.(12) HEAPS OF SYMBOLISM AND PROPHECY: if you're big on that.(13) EXCELLENT MYSTERIES: very hard to figure out the culprits; GRRM must have read a lot of mystery novels.(14) RICHLY TEXTURED FEMALE CHARACTERS: best male author on female characters I have read; realistic on how women think, too.(15) LOW MAGIC WORLD: magic is low key; not over the top so heroes can't get out of jams with it.REASON TO NOT READ GRRM(1) YOU LIKE YOUR MAIN CHARACTERS: GRRM does a good job of creating more likeable characters after a few die. But, if that isn't your style, you shouldn't be reading it. He kills off several, not just one, so be warned.(2) DO NOT CARE FOR GRITTY GRAY CHARACTERS: if you like more white and gray characters,

this may unsettle you. I suggest Feist or Goodkind or Dragonlance if you want a more straight forward story with strong archetypes.(3) MULTIPLE POINTS OF VIEWS TURN YOU OFF: if you prefer that the POVS only go to a few characters, this might be confusing for you.(4) SWEARING, SEX: there's a lot of it in this book just as there is in real life. If you have delicate ears, this book may upset you.(5) YOU DEMAND CLOSURE AT THE END OF EVERY BOOK: this isn't the case for all stories in the series. Some are still going on; some have been resolved; others have been created and are moving on.(6) IF YOU WANT A TARGET OR SOMEONE TO BLAME: this can be done to some extent but not as much. This is b/c he doesn't try to make anyone necessarily good or evil.(7) ARCHETYPES: some readers like archetypal characters because it's comfortable; we like the good young hero (sort of like Pug in Feist's THE RIFTWAR SAGA); it's familiar and we sometimes like to pretend we're this upcoming, great hero. You won't get much of this in GRRM with the exception of one or two characters. There really aren't any super heroes compared to all the other characters as it's more grittier and no one is shooting fireballs every millisecond or carrying around some super powerful sword.(8) LENGTH: you don't want to get into a long fantasy epic series. In that case, look for shorter works as this is biiig.(9) PATRIARCHY: men are most of the main characters with lots of power (one female exception). While this is realistic of the medieval era, some readers may not prefer this if they want more girl power, so to speak. By the way, if you don't want to commit to a big book until you know the author better, check out his short story, THE HEDGE KNIGHT, in LEGENDS. Overall, this is a great series and I happily purchase the hard cover when it comes out...

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