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American Epic: Reading the U.S. Constitution

By Epps, Garrett

Oxford University Press, 2013. Book Condition: New. Brand New, Unread Copy in Perfect Condition. A+ Customer Service! Summary: "In 1987, E.L. Doctorow celebrated the Constitution's bicentennial by reading it. "It is five thousand words long but reads like fifty thousand," he said. Distinguished legal scholar Garrett Epps--himself an award-winning novelist--disagrees. It's about 7,500 words. And Doctorow "missed a good deal of high rhetoric, many literary tropes, and even a trace of, if not wit, at least irony," he writes. Americans may venerate the Constitution, "but all too seldom is it read." In American Epic, Epps takes us through a complete reading of the Constitution--even the "boring" parts--to achieve an appreciation of its power and a holistic understanding of what it says. In this book he seeks not to provide a definitive interpretation, but to listen to the language and ponder its meaning. He draws on four modes of reading: scriptural, legal, lyric, and epic. The Constitution's first three words, for example, sound spiritual--but Epps finds them to be more aspirational than prayer-like. "Prayers are addressed to someone. either an earthly king or a divine lord, and great care is taken to name the addressee. This does the reverse. The speaker..."

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