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The novel describes how a Chicago mystic sparks a religious revival in the community that leads people to sell their possessions and conduct a mass pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

Jerusalem Details

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From Reader Review Jerusalem for online ebook

Sarah says

Stark berättelse om tro, hopp och kärlek, som berör än idag, över 100 år efter den först kom ut. Trots att människorna lever på helt annat sätt än vi gör idag brottas de med högst mänskliga teman och Selma Lagerlöf ger liv åt dessa karaktärer som gör att jag rycks med och bryr mig om deras dramatiska öde.

Joseph Sverker says

På många sätt en fantastisk bok. Hon är otrolig på att skildra livsödena. Jag har ingen aning om hur mycket som grundar sig på verkliga händelser, men jag blir väldigt nyfiken att ta reda på mer. Jag vet inte heller om Lagerlöf var nere i Jerusalem, men miljöbeskrivningar och förståelsen för landet är mycket detaljrika och målande. Mycket läsvärd.

Bjorn says

On the same day that he arrives in the holy land after never before even setting foot outside his own village, a middle-aged pilgrim comes down with a fever that proves to be fatal. Dying, he asks his companions to carry him into Jerusalem so he can at least see God's city first-hand. As they carry him through a noisy, stinky, crowded city full of people of three different faiths going about their regular business, they point out the landmarks to him: this is where the last supper was held, this is where Jesus was tortured, this is where he carried the cross, this is the holy grave. And he looks at all this mundanity and begs them to stop joking. This can't be it, show me the real Jerusalem. Where's the gold? Where's the glory? Where's the peace and serenity? Where's God? Did he really come all this way, did he give up everything, did he die just to see a... city?

There's a long tradition in Scandinavian literature, especially 19th century literature, of the "simple" bygdedrama - village drama, the story of a small village and the farmers who live there, the big man on top of the hill, the old pastor, the simple but virtuous tenant farmer's daughter, etc. Selma Lagerlöf's Jerusalem, loosely based on real events and often cited as one of the major reasons why she became the first female Nobel Prize winner, takes that and runs with it, turning it into a great early-modern novel in the process.

Focusing on the inhabitants of a small village deep in the forests of Sweden, it follows the wave of religious awakening that swept across the Swedish countryside in the late 1800s and led some to abandon everything and everyone they'd ever known to make the pilgrimage halfway across the world to settle in Palestine. She takes her time setting things up; of the two volumes, the first is set entirely in the small parish they all come from, setting up who they are, the life they've led for generations, and the conflicts that arise when the modern world starts getting closer - both material and ideological/religious rules suddenly start changing, and all of a sudden it's not a given that the richest farmer, the schoolteacher and the preacher are unquestionable authorities. The second volume details what happened to the ones who, eventually, sell their farms and give up everything to emigrate to a country about which they know very little apart from what they've read in the Bible.

Lagerlöf tells it all like a fairly simple story, limiting herself to what her uneducated characters can feasibly know and think about; at the same time, though, she manages to weave in discussions on faith (both religious and personal), community and family that never tries to give any easy answers or pick sides; even when she introduces mystical elements and themes (both Christian, Muslim and pagan; fairytales were still very much alive in these areas a 100 years ago) she leaves it up to the reader to decide whether they're real or just in the characters' heads - and indeed, if it matters one way or the other. But what really makes the book is the way she handles the characters, gradually letting the main characters in this, at heart, fairly simple story become more fully drawn, giving them a history that goes back generations and then occasionally raising the drama to heart-wrenching levels without having to resort to any far-fetched plots.

Beautiful.

Rebecca says

En klassiker skriven av en av sveriges mest kända författarinnor. Boken handlar om en grupp bönder i Dalarna som beslutar sig för att åka på välfärd till Jerusalem där de stöter på problem som endast Herren själv kan hjälpa dem med. Boken speglar ett samhälle för lite mer än 100 år sen men som man ändå väldigt enkelt kan dra kopplingar mellan till idag. Riktigt bra berättelse som får en att reflektera om än det ena och än det andra.

Abby says

An unexpectedly fun read. Nice ending, with not everything wrapped up neatly, but also not leaving the reader feeling a sequel is needed. I would now like to read more of her books, and I see why she won the Nobel Prize for Literature. Her description of the life of 'ordinary' people is well done without being sentimental, or too verbose or academic.

Ruben says

The way it's written and the speed of the plot make this book completely contemporary. Even more interesting if you consider that the whole thing is based on a true story.

Tanja Berg says

Selma Lagerlöf was the first woman to win the Nobel Prize in literature. "The Wonderful Adventures of Nils" was a much beloved story when I was little and I even returned to it as an adult. Despite this, and despite having read and liked other works by the same author, I was surprised at how modern and relevant this book was.

It's a story about a Swedish community that get invaded by a religious sect. That's basically what happened, although it is subtly told. It's the story about people who left their property to go to Jerusalem. It's the story about some of the ones that were left behind. It is also a quite enchanting and unexpected love story. I don't

normally like those, but in this quaint setting and being as well-told as it was, I much enjoye the lot of it.

I will definitely be dusting off the books by Selma Lagerlöf that I have in my shelf and have not read. Some years ago I saved a handful of beautiful leather bound books by her and I still have a couple that I haven't gotten around to yet.

Emilio Berra says

Un mondo altrove

"Finché il tuo cuore sarà legato alle cose terrene, rimarrà legato al dolore" .

La grande scrittrice svedese Selma Lagerlof (Premio Nobel 1909) scrisse questo libro dopo un viaggio in Palestina, compiuto nel 1899 per visitare una comunità religiosa d'impronta americana che si era là stabilita per vivere più intensamente il Cristianesimo e che era stata seguita da una trentina di persone abbienti le quali lasciarono la Svezia dopo aver venduto all'asta i propri beni.

"Jerusalem" uscì in due volumi nel 1901/02, e fu ben presto un bestseller.

L'autrice notò certamente la grandezza d'animo di questi pellegrini, ma fu colpita anche dai forti dissidi fra le varie comunità dei diversi orientamenti, protese a contendersi le anime, in un periodo in cui il dialogo inter-religioso non era affatto in auge. Così che possiamo leggere come, accanto all'austera Gerusalemme storica, sia sorta quella moderna : "qui i cattolici dicono male dei protestanti, i metodisti dei quaccheri, i luterani dei riformati, i russi degli armeni. Qui s'infiltrano l'invidia e la gelosia (...) qui non c'è posto per la misericordia, qui tutti si odiano".

E' sempre bello leggere Selma Lagerlof, così capace di farci uscire per un momento dalle strettoie della nostra contemporaneità, in modo poi da rientrarci un po' rinnovati e più liberi, come emancipati rispetto alla martellante attualità, perché questa scrittrice grandissima pare saper scegliere sempre i sentiero che conduce alla fonte delle cose.

C'è nel libro qualcosa di fiabesco che incanta e c'è qualcosa di epico che infonde una speciale grandezza a queste numerose pagine che procedono con tocco poetico conferito dal dono della semplicità.

Laura says

Free download available at Project Gutenberg.

This is not my cup of tea. Or I am not in the right mood to read it, who knows?

Hadrian says

Lagerlöf is clearly a talented writer, and it took far too long to find and read something of hers.

Jerusalem is a generational story of village life and an investigation into the roles of religion. She takes into account the many parts of religion: how it is a form of social connection, a way of explaining the world, and a way for people to form new movements and cast aside material values. She has a keen eye for human

behavior, and I was impressed by her depictions in a direct style.

I'm still turning over in my mind the words of the children near the end of the first volume: "We don't want to go to Jerusalem! We want to go home!" There are many lines like that worth thinking about.

As an aside, my library edition is 100 years old. It lists her as the only female winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature, instead of the first. That was in 1909. It would take until 1926 for there to be a second.

Emelie says

I find the book a little bit to lengthy. Really long bits that is just descriptive and adds nothing to the story, but gives flesh to the characters. I've mixed feelings about it. The language is beautiful, the narration and descriptions lovely, so I hated it, even if I loved it.

Well build characters.

It was a bit scary to see how fanatic they were, specially in the beginning. Interesting note she made that it was the Christians in Jerusalem that fought each other, not Christians against Jews and Muslims.

Manny says

Moving, perceptive book about religious mania, full of both intellectual and emotional intelligence. The author, who was herself deeply religious, does an excellent job of telling the story without judging the main characters.

Extremely relevant to the world today - it's a shame this book isn't better known. The film is also outstanding, and equally unknown outside Sweden.

Parikhit says

'Jerusalem' was my first book authored by Selma Lagerlof, an authoress I am certain I would have never read and a chance encounter made this possible. With a splendid description and an equally splendid narration, Selma Lagerlof left me both amazed and shocked with 'Jerusalem'.

'Jerusalem' narrates the simple but gargantuan story of changing dogmas and faith in a village tucked away in the lush green highlands of Sweden. It spans over two generations and faith is what Selma Lagerlof has expounded in this book. A new faith emerges in the hamlet wherein the believers decide to leave for Jerusalem to help the downtrodden and comfort the poor. Giving up the want for any material pleasure this group of believers drown relationships and families for a greater cause; to walk in the ways of the Lord and in search for a truer home in Jerusalem. However, Selma Lagerlof ends the novel with so many questions. An underlying tussle between faith and honour subtly remain etched in the entire book.

Hugo Duregård says

Så vackert skriven. Selma = King

Sonia says

Selma's great talent is showing fully in this compelling story. Every description has its place and meaning and in spite of the length and theme, this is a truly "unputdownable" novel. The historical setting is meticulously accurate and this makes it an interesting read. Her empathy for the characters and her lyrical prose are a joy to read.
