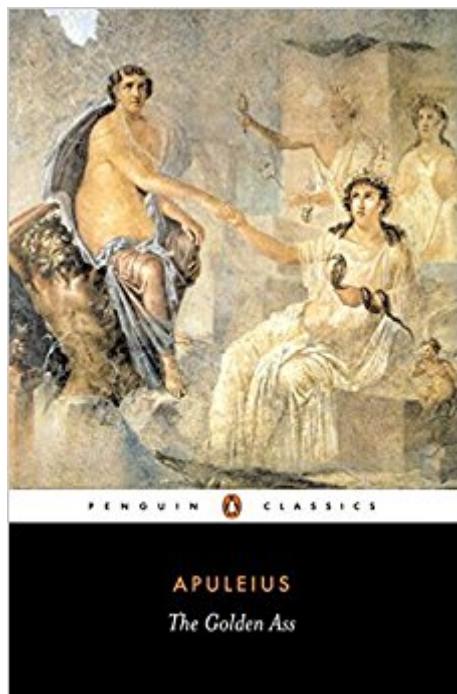


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# The Golden Ass (Penguin Classics)



## Synopsis

An enchanting story that has inspired generations of writers, including Boccaccio, Shakespeare, Cervantes and Keats. Written towards the end of the second century AD, *The Golden Ass* tells the story of the many adventures of a young man whose fascination with witchcraft leads him to be transformed into a donkey. The bewitched Lucius passes from owner to owner - encountering a desperate gang of robbers and being forced to perform lewd 'human' tricks on stage - until the Goddess Isis finally breaks the spell and initiates Lucius into her cult. It has long been disputed whether Apuleius meant this last-minute conversion seriously or as a final comic surprise, and the challenge of interpretation continues to keep readers fascinated. Apuleius' enchanting story has inspired generations of writers such as Boccaccio, Shakespeare, Cervantes and Keats with its dazzling combination of allegory, satire, bawdiness and sheer exuberance, and *The Golden Ass* remains the most continuously and accessibly amusing book to have survived from Classical antiquity. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Lucius Apuleius (2nd Century AD) was a North African fabulist who Latinized the Greek myths and legends. He travelled widely, visiting Italy and Asia, where he was initiated into numerous religious mysteries. He drew on the knowledge he gained about the priestly fraternities to write the *Golden Ass*, which Cupid and Psyche is extracted from. E.J. Kenney is Emeritus Kennedy Professor of Latin in the University of Cambridge. His publications include a critical edition of Ovid's amatory works. He is a Fellow of the British Academy.

It's a shame they don't give this to high-school students in the original language. It would sure make them a whole lot more interested in learning Latin than reading Caesar or Catullus ever could. (I'm guessing that the human-donkey sex scenes--narrated by the donkey--make it a tough sell to local school districts.) Which is too bad, because those scenes AREN'T gratuitous. The whole fast-moving adventure tale is actually a moral and spiritual allegory about the need for Man (and Woman) to transcend his animal, human nature in order to obtain true wisdom and divine Love. (Yes, the pagans--or at least Apuleius--seemed to have a pretty good idea that divine Love was/is, indeed, a "thing.") And the gender-neutrality of the message is reinforced by the inclusion of the Cupid/Psyche story in the middle of our hero's (mis-)adventures. Where Lucius (the human-turned-animal narrator) is male, (the human) Psyche is female; where Lucius learns that he must submit himself to the great goddess (Isis) in order to be saved from his animal fate, Psyche learns that she must submit herself to the punishments of Aphrodite (the goddess of Desire), including a trip to hell, before she can be reunited with Aphrodite's son, the god of Love, and become divine herself. And BOTH of them learn that you cannot gain knowledge of true, divine LOVE until you have a) been kind to others and b) bravely endured suffering first. Highly recommended.

You'll find inspiration for everything from the transformation of Bottom in *Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream* to the tub of Chaucer's "The Miller's Tale" and even the fate of the unfortunate Lampwick in *Collodi's The Adventures of Pinocchio* in the chapters of Apuleius' *The Golden Ass*. It's a bawdy and beastly (although not as consistently so as some reviews may lead one to believe), imaginative, and unexpectedly romantic in its tale of Cupid and Psyche. And even if the late arrival of Isis plays like the driest *deus ex machina* and we're treated to a healthy helping of didacticism with our oats at the story's end, it's

close. The Golden Ass remains indispensable to any scholar seeking to study the evolution of the modern novel. The Penguin edition translated by E. J. Kenney is exemplary by turns, lyrical and laugh-inducing. Buy it, then kick up your hooves, and enjoy.

Show that Latin literature can be light and pleasant to read even nowadays. These kind of books should more often replace the boring memorizing of grammar and declinations and would attract more interest on the part of students.

very good book.

I recommend Amor and Psyche. The Psychic Development of the Feminine. A commentary on the Tale by Apuleius by Erick Neumann. I suggest reading The Golden Ass first, than Neumann and then to read Apuleius again.

It's a pretty funny book despite how many centuries old it is. The reading goes by fast too because of all the short and humorous stories

This book is a riveting classic. I couldn't put it down. The language and style is as good today as when it was created, and the pace is well set. However the ending is somewhat anti-climactic.

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