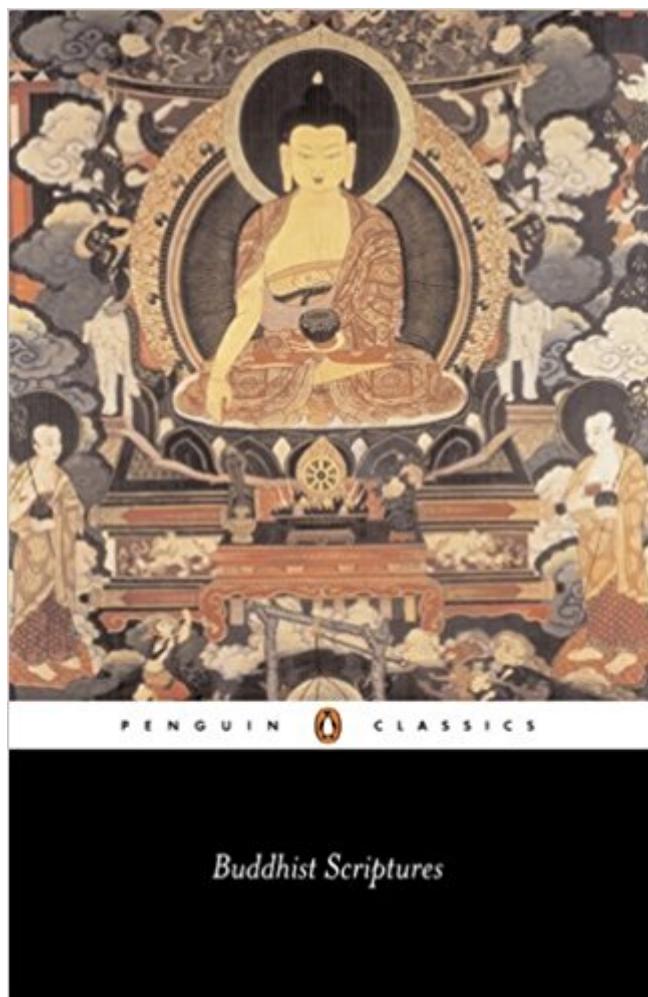


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Buddhist Scriptures (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

While Buddhism has no central text comparable to the Bible or Koran, there is a powerful body of scripture from across Asia that encompasses the dharma, or the teachings of the Buddha. In this rich anthology, eminent scholar Donald S. Lopez, Jr. brings together works from a broad historical and geographical range, and from such languages as Pali, Sanskrit, Tibetan, Chinese, and Japanese. There are tales of the Buddha's past lives, a discussion of qualities and qualifications for a monk, and an exploration of the many meanings of enlightenment. Together they provide a vivid picture of the Buddha and of the vast and profound nature of the Buddhist tradition. 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.

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Customer Reviews

Donald Lopez is Professor of Buddhist and Tibetan Studies in the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures, University of Michigan. He is the author of *Buddhism* (Penguin, 2000, r/i 2002) and *Modern Buddhism* (Penguin, 2002).

required reading for class

This book is a nice collection of Buddhist stories, chants, and prayers. This is a nice fit on the book shelf.

Well written and comprehensive text. Purchased it used and it arrived in record time and was in the condition expected. Good value and excellent reading for students of Buddhism, or for anyone simply interested in Buddhism.

Very informative and enlightening.

This is a very useful anthology for students of Buddhism. In addition to highly readable translations of selected ancient texts filled with descriptions and advice; it also includes many instructive fables and tales, including "Maitreya describes the Future" and "A King gives away his Head." Of particular note is the predecessor to the biblical story of the loaves and fishes -- it is the story of how a single portion of alms fed 84,000 sravakas and 12,000 bodhisattvas, and still the food did not run out. hmmmm, sound familiar?

Great volume, lots of sutras from the Theravada beginnings up to late Mahayana texts all arranged with helpful introductions. One glaring flaw though: The author decided to leave no separate guide as to which sutra is which. Most books like this will have it in the table of contents or even have a separate table in the beginning or an appendix at the end of the book to guide the reader. For this one though you just have to flip through pages until you find the sutra you're looking for. It's kind of absurd really. So instead of a table that says the name(s) of the sutras contained within he just made up his own cute little titles. For example: If you're looking for the text he included from "The Questions of Milinda (Milindapanha)" you'll just have to guess and flip around until you find out he put it under a section with his own fun little title "One Buddha Per Universe". Or let's say you want to read the selection from the "Gandavyuha sutra" you'll flip around blindly until you stumble upon "Maya, Mother of The Buddha". Good luck.

I rarely take the time to write reviews on books; however in this case, due to the difficulty of finding good books on the topic of Buddhism, I hope for this to be useful. I have been interested in Buddhism for many years now and I have read a fair few texts. This book is the best overview of

Buddhism I have come across. In my experience, books on Buddhism in the 'West' tend to be either shallow self-help books, or confusing because they are implicitly written from the perspective of a particular school or tradition (without making that clear). This work stands out since it succeeds in giving an overview over the many (and highly diverse) schools and traditions. Sure, not every school is covered but at the very least it makes sure you understand that there are very different schools, which a Westerner won't automatically understand if he just reads, for example, a book by the Dalai Lama (whose books, I want to add, are excellent as well, but obviously written from a Gelug Tibetan viewpoint). In addition, Dr Lopez' work is exemplary in the way it adds context to the concise and well-digestible chapters. Again, for a Westerner who isn't an expert on the topic, it is nigh impossible to read an authentic Buddhist text and understand the meaning without knowledgeable commentary; in fact, even for Buddhist scholars that can be hard which is why there is a large body of commentaries, sometimes, over the course of the centuries, even commentaries upon commentaries, in Buddhist literature. The only (minor) criticism I would make is that for some texts, the translators have really put a lot of annotations and editors' notes in, which unfortunately make the texts seem slightly littered. However, in fairness this is only true for a very few of the many texts. Otherwise, I can only repeat that this is by far the best book on Buddhism that I have come across.

This collection is a little heavier on Mahayana stuff but overall comes across as a great introductory piece to the canonical Buddhist scriptures. Like my copy of the Majjhima Nikaya, if there is a long paragraph listing a bunch of standardized features (e.g. the seven factors of enlightenment, the four jhanas) the first such feature is written out in full and then the following ones are abbreviated by ellipses. If you're just getting into Buddhism and haven't decided on a sect yet, this text will give you a feel for the flavour of a broad swath of Buddhism as it appears in the sacred texts.

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