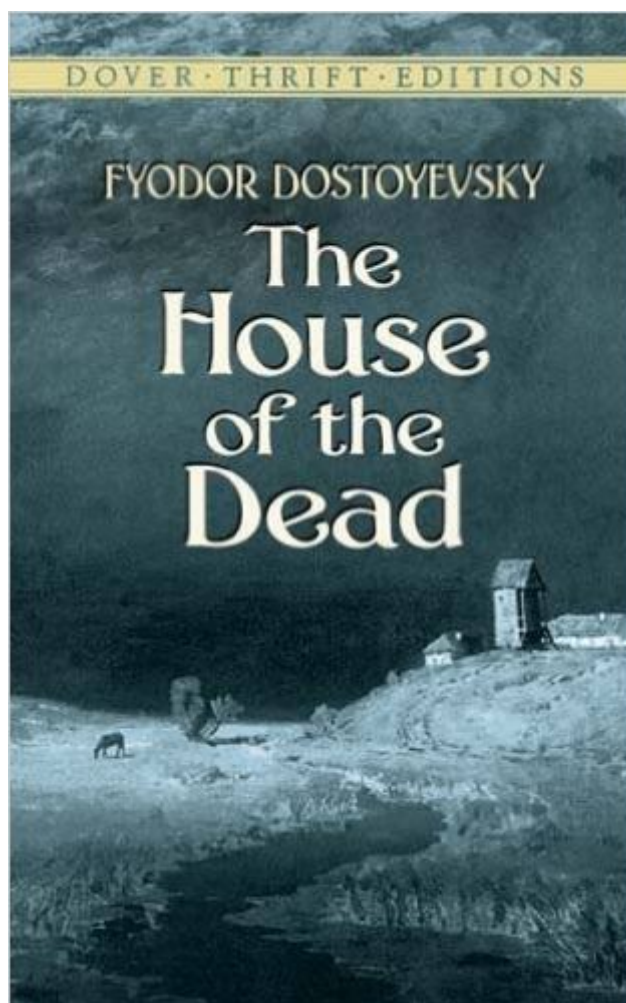


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The House Of The Dead (Dover Thrift Editions)



Synopsis

Accused of political subversion as a young man, Dostoyevsky was sentenced to four years of hard labor at a Siberian prison camp – a horrifying experience from which, years later, he developed this semi-autobiographical memoir of a man condemned to penal servitude for murdering his wife. Describing in relentless detail the physical and mental suffering of the convicts, this haunting and remarkable work ranks among Dostoyevsky's greatest masterpieces.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars – See all reviews (51 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

Dostoevsky's *The House of the Dead* is an account of life in a Siberian prison, drawing heavily from its author's own imprisonment for sedition. The narrator is nominally serving time for murdering his wife out of jealousy, but Dostoevsky makes very little effort to maintain the artifice that the narrator is anyone other than himself, as the narrator even refers to himself as a political prisoner on a couple of occasions. The novel consists mainly of a series of anecdotes relating such things as the staging of a prison play, the memories of some convicts of the crimes that landed them in prison, and the attempted escape of two of the prisoners, all interspersed among observations of more day-to-day affairs like prison food and corporal punishment. A number of the stories are very interesting, and overall Dostoevsky paints an impressive picture of prison life as a whole. Though it's clear that his experience in prison was a brutal one, the reader never feels as though Dostoevsky is overplaying the prisoners' suffering, which makes it seem all the more authentic. However, I'd have to say this sort of narrative doesn't really play into Dostoevsky's overall strength as an author. Dostoevsky's best works generally have a strong and coherent (though in some cases

somewhat melodramatic) plot that develops more or less linearly throughout the novel; The House of the Dead, on the other hand, is hardly more than a series of related roughly-15-page short stories and so inevitably lacks the suspense of much of Dostoevsky's other work. For the same reason, none of the characters get especially well developed--the reader is left with a lot of interesting character sketches, none of which get fleshed out.

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