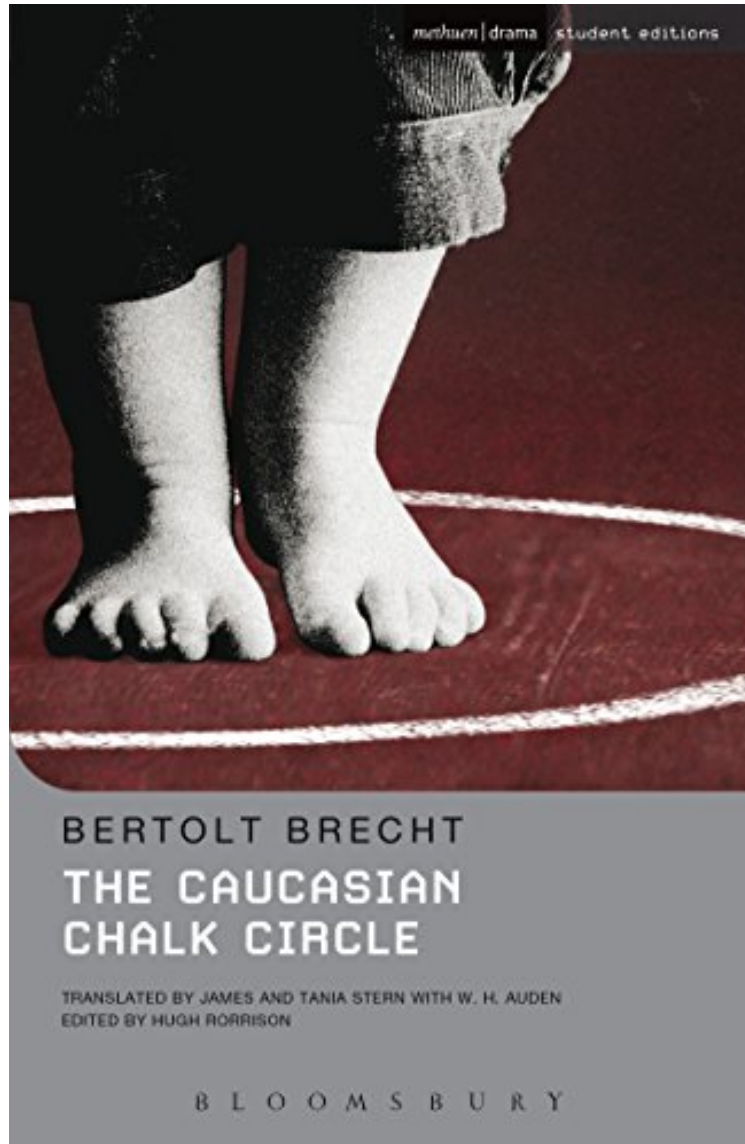


(Download) The Caucasian Chalk Circle (Student Editions)

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Bertolt Brecht

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Bertolt Brecht : The Caucasian Chalk Circle (Student Editions) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Caucasian Chalk Circle (Student Editions):

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. A PARABLE ON PROPERTY By Alfred Johnson One of the master communist playwright Bertolt Brecht's strengths as an artist was the ability to set up a moral dilemma and work it out to a conclusion, not always a satisfactory one, by play's end. This is unusual in a seemingly orthodox follower of the old Stalinist' socialist realist' cultural program. This work nevertheless permitted Brecht to address an age-old question about the nature of property ownership, extending it from its natural and historic setting in land and chattels to the

question of personal human ownership. The question posed here is whether a child abandoned by its natural mother then found and raised by another woman should go to the former or that latter. Nice dilemma, right? But Brecht, as seen in *Mother Courage* and other parables, is not above cutting right to the bone on moral questions. What makes this work a cut above some of Brecht's more didactic plays is the way that he weaves the parable about the odd resolution of an ancient Chinese property dispute and places that 'wisdom' in context of a then current dispute between two Soviet-era communes. In the ancient dispute the judge who is called upon to render judgment, using the circle as a medium to resolve the dispute, seems to be Solomonic but is really a buffoon. This is pure Brechtian irony. This says as much about Brecht's attitude toward property as it does about the old-time Chinese justice system. The question of property rights as presented by Brecht and their value as a societal glue is also something the reader or viewer of this play should think about as well.

19 of 20 people found the following review helpful. "Almost" an age of justice
By A.J. Brecht's "The Caucasian Chalk Circle," written in self-imposed exile towards the end of World War II, is a story within a play, in which a bard, or singer, interrupts a group of Caucasian farmers arguing over ownership of land that has been ravaged by Nazi tanks and entertains them with a relevant tale of yore. In a city called Grusinia, the Governor is executed in a coup and his wife flees for her life, abandoning their baby son Michael, who is picked up by a humble kitchen maid named Grusha. Having recently betrothed herself to a soldier named Simon who is away on duty, she sets out on a cross-country journey with the infant to get help from her brother, a farmer in a distant village. Lavrenti, her brother, suggests she get married immediately to avoid suspicion that the baby is hers out of wedlock, and the most available candidate is a local wretched peasant. After living with this man for a couple of years, Grusha is apprehended by soldiers who have come to take young Michael, the sole heir of the deposed Governor's estate, back to Grusinia. The case of Michael's custody, contested by the Governor's wife against Grusha, is brought to trial, where the judge, a drunk named Azdak whose unofficial appointment to this position is a farce, decrees that the boy will be placed inside a circle drawn with chalk on the courtroom floor, and that the woman who is able to pull him out of the circle is the real mother. (Study the judge's exact words when you read this.) Although the story is of medieval Chinese origin, Brecht's play is a sort of refashioning of the Biblical anecdote about Solomon and expands the idea by supplying a whole backstory to the women's argument. Solomon's judgment is accepted because his wisdom is universally considered to be impeccable, but what of a man like Azdak who functions on whim more than on wisdom? The ending is subtly brilliant in the sense that the outcome of the contest is subject to semantic debate (whether you think the judgment is fair or logical or contradictory depends on how closely you read the judge's words), but also in the question of irony or sincerity in the suggestion that true justice will be conferred by nature rather than by man.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great play!
By StriveForExcellence
The Caucasian Chalk Circle is a very entertaining and enjoyable play to read or perform, whilst also containing attitudes and ideologies to analyze. It's a great read for its own sake, but can also easily be used to teach literature in a classroom. A great play!

This Student Edition of Brecht's classic dramatisation of the conflict over possession of a child features an extensive introduction and commentary that includes a plot summary, discussion of the context, themes, characters, style and language as well as questions for further study and notes on words and phrases in the text. It is the perfect edition for students of theatre and literature. Brecht projects an ancient Chinese story onto a realistic setting in Soviet Georgia. In a theme that echoes the Judgment of Solomon, two women argue over the possession of a child; thanks to the unruly judge, Azdak (one of Brecht's most vivid creations) natural justice is done and the peasant Grusha keeps the child she loves, even though she is not its mother. Written in exile in the United States during the Second World War, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* is a politically-charged, much-revived and complex example of Brecht's epic theatre. This volume contains expert notes on the author's life and work, historical and political background to the play, photographs from stage productions and a glossary of difficult words and phrases. It features the acclaimed translation by James and Tania Stern with W. H. Auden.

"One of the greatest poets and dramatists of our century" *The Observer*
About the Author Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) is acknowledged as one of the great dramatists whose work has had a considerable influence on the theatre. His landmark plays include *The Threepenny Opera*, *The Life of Galileo*, and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. His plays and dramatic theory are central to the study of modern theatre.