



American Epic: Reading the U.S. Constitution (Paperback)

By Garrett Epps

Oxford University Press Inc, United States, 2015. Paperback. Condition: New. Reprint. Language: English . Brand New Book. In 1987, E.L. Doctorow celebrated the Constitution's bicentennial by reading it. It is five thousand words long but reads like fifty thousand, he said. Distinguished legal scholar Garrett Epps—himself an award-winning novelist—disagrees. It's about 7,500 words. And Doctorow missed a good deal of high rhetoric, many literary tropes, and even a trace of, if not wit, at least irony, he writes. Americans may venerate the Constitution, but all too seldom is it read. In *American Epic*, Epps takes us through a complete reading of the Constitution—even the boring parts—to achieve an appreciation of its power and a holistic understanding of what it says. In this book he seeks not to provide a definitive interpretation, but to listen to the language and ponder its meaning. He draws on four modes of reading: scriptural, legal, lyric, and epic. The Constitution's first three words, for example, sound spiritual—but Epps finds them to be more aspirational than prayer-like. Prayers are addressed to someone—either an earthly king or a divine lord, and great care is taken to name the addressee. This does the reverse. The...



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