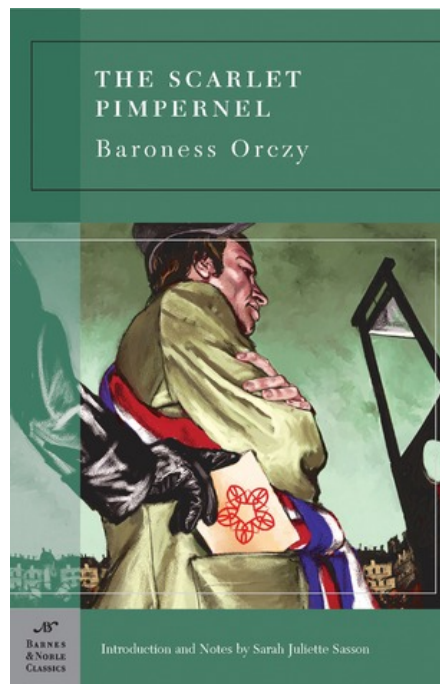




The Scarlet Pimpernel

Emmuska Orczy , Rachel Perkins (Illustrator) , Sarah Juliette Sasson (Introduction)

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In the year 1792, Sir Percy and Lady Marguerite Blakeney are the darlings of British society—he is known as one of the wealthiest men in England and a dimwit; she is French, a stunning former actress, and the cleverest woman in Europe—and they find themselves at the center of a deadly political intrigue. The Reign of Terror controls France, and every day aristocrats in Paris fall victim to Madame la Guillotine. Only one man can rescue them—the Scarlet Pimpernel—a master of disguises who leaves a calling card bearing only a signature red flower. As the fascinating connection between the Blakeneys and this mysterious hero is revealed, they are forced to choose between love and loyalty in order to avoid the French agent Chauvelin, who relentlessly hunts the Scarlet Pimpernel.

First published in 1905, *The Scarlet Pimpernel* is the best-known novel by **Baroness Emmuska Orczy**, a prolific author of popular fiction and plays. The novel pioneered the tale of the masked avenger and paved the way for such future enigmatic swashbucklers as Zorro, Superman, and the Lone Ranger. Repeatedly adapted for stage and screen—most recently as a successful Broadway musical—*The Scarlet Pimpernel* is a relevant and enormously entertaining tale of survival and pluck during times of widespread fear, hypocrisy, and corruption.

The Scarlet Pimpernel Details

Date : Published August 1st 2005 by Barnes Noble Classics (first published 1905)

ISBN : 9781593082345

Author : Emmuska Orczy , Rachel Perkins (Illustrator) , Sarah Juliette Sasson (Introduction)

Format : Paperback 271 pages

Genre : Classics, Historical, Historical Fiction, Fiction, Adventure, Romance

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Download and Read Free Online The Scarlet Pimpernel Emmuska Orczy , Rachel Perkins (Illustrator) , Sarah Juliette Sasson (Introduction)

From Reader Review The Scarlet Pimpernel for online ebook

Katelyn Buxton says

I think The Scarlet Pimpernel has single-handedly rocketed itself into the top five of my favorite classics list. I. Love. This. Book.

While reading it, I kept wondering why I hadn't read it sooner! It had been on my TBR for a while, and I was ecstatic upon the discovery that it was free in ebook form on Amazon. But everything else kept getting in the way of reading it... it was always just a little too low in my priorities... so I was glad when #AuthorBookClub on Twitter decided to read it this month, and gave me the kick in the pants necessary to start me reading it at last!

Let me tell you why I love it, folks. (And I'll try not to wax too poetic). ;P First and foremost, the first half reminded me strongly of the movie Beyond the Mask. (If you know what I'm talking about, we're friends already). My sister and I have had a small *cough* *small* obsession with that movie ever since it came out two years ago. It has many of the same elements of The Scarlet Pimpernel, which won me over immediately upon the reading of the book.

Now, for the reasons I love it.

- 1.) A masked man! (Okay not literally masked, but figuratively). A hero/vigilante sort of character with a devil-may-care attitude that does credit to his type—which is the kind of noble does-what's-right-because-it's-right character people have been rooting for since the dawn of storytelling creation.
- 2.) The romance. I know that this part is kind of controversial, but overall, I thought it was really very sweet. And the fact that it takes place between a married couple is a refreshing change. I don't really agree with Marguerite's tendencies to describe true love as "worship," (since I believe the only thing we as humans should worship is God our Creator), but her marriage was brought back from a sorry state of existence by her realizing what she really had, and appreciating it.
- 3.) Marguerite is not your typical helpless female love interest/main character of the time period, either. She has brains, and she uses them. She's tough in a way that goes far deeper than mere physical ability, and I think modern books and movies would do well to follow her example.
- 4.) And let's not forget the dry wit! I laughed out loud more than once, and I love Orczy's way of springing the humorous bits where you least expect them.
- 5.) Another thing that I enjoyed was the fact that The Scarlet Pimpernel is pretty much historical fiction, but I didn't have to know anything about The French Revolution beforehand to know what was going on, since Orczy explained it. *gives Kidnapped by Robert Louis Stevenson a sidelong glance* Believe me, I knew nothing—but now I do.

Overall, it was a wonderful adventure set in 1792, filled with real danger (guillotines, yikes)! romance, characters you can root for, and villains to despise with every fiber of your being. Perhaps the only thing I didn't really care for was the open prejudice towards Jews, the frequent use of "demmed" and occasional straight-up "d--n," but that didn't bother me too much since the rest was so amazing.

So. Why are you still here? *Go read the book!*

Madeline says

Okay, I read this for exactly two reasons: one, I thought this book was on The List (it's not); and two, the Scarlet Pimpernel is the inspiration for the Bruce Wayne/Batman dichotomy and I am a giant dork.

For a book about a secret team of English nobleman working to rescue French nobles from the scary revolutionists who want them dead, this is a surprisingly unexciting book. The pace is fast, and there's plenty of spying and blackmailing and races against time, but there isn't a single fistfight, swordfight, gunfight or slapping fight in the whole book. There's sort of a chase scene at the end, but the pursued party is in a slow-moving cart and the pursuer is on foot. There's plenty of drama and intrigue and excitement, but just *one* duel would have been nice.

Luckily, the characters are all great. Sir Percy, in addition to being a precursor to Bruce Wayne's vigilante-disguised-as-idiot-rich-boy act, also reminded me of Lord Peter Wimsey (another fan of the Badass Disguised as Fop method), which was awesome. His archenemy is Chauvelin, basically the French version of Hans Landa in *Inglorious Basterds*, and everybody was generally so cool that I forgot about how amazingly *not* scary a name like "Scarlet Pimpernel" is.

The true hero of this story, surprisingly, is not the Scarlet Pimpernel. He mostly stays in the background while people talk about him, and throughout the whole book we never really get to see him in action. Instead, we see almost everything through the eyes of Sir Percy's wife, Marguerite, who despite everything manages to be awesome. The issue I had with Marguerite was that she's repeatedly referred to as the cleverest woman in Europe, but god damn is she stupid. Sir Percy might as well have been dancing around wearing a sign that read "Hello, I am secretly the Scarlet Pimpernel" and she wouldn't figure it out. At one point, Marguerite snoops around in Percy's study and sees the following objects: maps of the English and French coastlines on the walls, and a small ring with a scarlet pimpernel flower engraved on it. Marguerite stares blindly at these objects and is like, "But what does it all *mean*?"

The major flaw in the Percy/Marguerite marriage was a lack of communication. First we find out that Marguerite had a French family arrested by accident before she was married, and never told Percy about it even after she found out that she'd made a mistake. Then, when Chauvelin tells Marguerite that she has to work as a spy for him or he'll kill her brother, Marguerite doesn't tell her husband what's going on until *after* she sells out the Pimpernel without knowing who he is. I mean, Jesus. Also he's in disguise for the last part of the book and it was *so fucking obvious* which character was actually Percy in disguise I wanted to throw the book at the wall.

But fortunately, this all ends with Marguerite becoming awesome, racing against the clock to save her husband and defeat Chauvelin, and the ending between Percy and Marguerite is surprisingly sweet and very satisfying.

(that got a bit rambly, didn't it?) Anyway, in conclusion: a fun espionage story, even if it's not as swashbuckling as I expected and everyone except the Pimpernel is an idiot. I'll be looking up the movie version soon, and will likely prefer it to the book.

Anne says

Here's my new and improved title for this book...

The Scarlet Pimpernel: A Classic That Doesn't Suck Sweaty Balls.

I can't usually make it through classic literature.

Does this make me a bad person?

I think not.

There are manymanymany other things I do on a daily basis that make me a bad person, but not being able to force myself to read (*in my opinion*) outdated and overrated books is not one of them.

There are other readers out there like me, I'm sure of it! And it's you guys that I'm talking to now.

Rejoice, fellow slackers! There *is* a classic that you can actually read!

Imagine it...

You're sitting on a bench engrossed in a book. The person next to you leans over and asks, "*What are you reading?*". You can finally plaster a smug-ass smile on your face and say, "*Why, right now I'm thoroughly enjoying Orczy's classic, **The Scarlet Pimpernel.***".

See?! Doesn't that sound awesome!

And when someone asks you what you've recently read, you won't have to admit to the fact that you're deeply into a series about an alien who falls in love with his human neighbor, your extensive comic book collection, or all of that erotica that's hidden neatly away on your Kindle!

Now is this book *really* a four star novel by my 'real-book' standards?

Fuck, no!

It's old as shit. The copy I got didn't even have anything on the cover.

You know it's old when it's got that black cover-thing going on.

The pages were creaky, it smelled weird, and I think there's a possibility I should have had it tested for mold before I brought it into my house.

But.

It's a readable book.

Go get it, and for a few blissful moments you can pretend that you're an intellectual giant.

Rowena says

“A surging, seething murmuring crowd, of beings that are human only in name, for to the eye and ear they seem naught but savage creatures, animated by vile passions and by the lust of vengeance and of hate.”- The Scarlet Pimpernel, Baroness Orczy

It's been too long since I last enjoyed a classic novel and I was beginning to fear that I was falling out of love with my favourite genre. Well, I found the remedy with “The Scarlet Pimpernel.” What a lot of fun!

The French Revolution is one of my favourite periods of history to learn about despite the morbidity and the violence and cruelty. It's shocking to be reminded of the fact that even children were guillotined. It makes you wonder why on earth people felt the need to be so barbaric and unforgiving.

Baroness Orczy also introduces us to one of the most interesting characters in literature, in my opinion, Sir Percival Blakeney, Bart., aka The Scarlet Pimpernel. His character is an example of what I'd call the Columbo effect, a dopey demeanour that puts people at ease and disguises sheer brilliance. Sir Percy is a fop who is obsessed with fashion and making inane comments that amuse those around him. Surely he can't be the Scarlet Pimpernel???

Florence (Lefty) MacIntosh says

Melodrama all the rage when this was written so be prepared, it's pretty silly. A fast easy read you can whip off in no time that's a lot of fun. *Odd's fish* but that Sir Percy is HIGHLY amusing! "*The foppish ways, the affected movements, the perpetual inane laugh.*" High intrigue will keep you turning those pages, and who can resist a guy named Pimpernel who runs around in various disguises rescuing people from having their heads lopped off? Loved him for "*his marvellous audacity, the boundless impudence which had caused him to beard his most implacable enemies*"

For historical-adventure 4 stars, as romance maybe a 2. **As kudos for creating the truly superb character of Sir Percy Blakeney 3 1/2 stars**

Cons: The heroine Lady Marguerite...We're supposed to believe she's the cleverest woman in Britain yet she can't figure out the identity of The Pimpernel? Seriously, it couldn't have been more obvious if he'd been walking around wearing a flashing neon sign. *Oh la la* she's dumb as a post and not the least bit witty. Would it have killed the author to have tossed her a couple of decent lines instead of giving them all to Percy? "*Hoity-toity, citizeness,*" *she said gaily, "what fly stings you, pray?"* was about as good as it got...

Memorable: "*Demmed excitable little puppy,*" *he added under his breath, "Faith, Ffoulkes, if that's a specimen of the goods you and your friends bring over from France, my advice to you is, drop 'em 'mid Channel*" - Sir Percy Blakeney

Rachelle says

I loved this book. It is so much better than the movie. I love the movie too....but the book is so much richer in detail. The only reason I didn't go for a 5 is that I am a sentimental fool and I wanted to see more of the reconciliation of Percy and Marguerite. It ended so quickly. There was so much build up as Marguerite realizes her errors - and her love...that I wanted some more resolution there. There were some good thoughts that I really related to...it says of Marguerite "...she, too, had worn a mask in assuming a contempt for him, whilst, as a matter of fact, she completely misunderstood him." So true. People that we dislike...are more likely simply people that we don't understand. It is also interesting to me the way that her heart guided her from the beginning to select Percy...even though later on she seems to not know why she married him at all. She should have trusted her heart all along and known that she would not have chosen an individual that was not admirable and courageous. Lastly pride is a good theme. Nearly ruined them. I haven't mentioned the political setting of the story. Besides, of course, the enormous tragedy, it is an interesting study of human nature. It reminded me of the women's movement. Of course a good thing....that I am truly grateful for...but in the effort to be ever so equal.... there is a level of degradation as well. Brogard, a free citizen, behaves rudely to other characters in the novel...as explanation..."It was distinctly more fitting to his newborn dignity to be as rude as possible; it was a sure sign of servility to meekly reply to civil questions."it was "his right as a citizen and a free man, to be as rude as he well pleased." In order for women to be equal to men....must we also be as crude, aggressive and well.... manly as men?

Lyn says

Rick Flair talks about The Scarlet Pimpernel.

WHOOOOOOOAAAAA!

LET ME TELL YOU SOMETHIN, BROTHER, THIS IS ONE BAD MAMMA JAMMA OF A BOOK, YOU KNOW WHAT I'M SAYIN??

Let me step it down a notch for you literary librarian types and let me pose a question: was the Scarlet Pimpernel the first masked superhero? I mean I'm thinkin about Batman, Green Hornet, The Shadow – right? All those cats had a hidden identity and they had their crime fightin side too.

YOU KNOW WHAT I'M SAYIN??? The Stylin', profilin', limousine riding, jet flying, kiss-stealing, wheelin' n' dealin' son of a gun!

WHOOOOOOOAAAAA!

For all you who don't know, this was set in the French Revolution and unlike us in AMERICA who settled our fight the old-fashioned way, those FRENCHIES took to choppin off HEADS of the old French aristocracy and royalty. And while the author, a BARONESS herself, gives some objective reasons for the French dislike of the uppity rich folks, she has her hero THE SCARLET PIMPERNEL! ride across the English Channel and rescue French royals.

And just like RICK FLAIR, THE SCARLET PIMPERNEL IS A CLASS ACT: ALL THE WOMEN WANT TO BE WITH HIM AND ALL THE MEN WANT TO BE HIM! The English at least.

WHOOOOOOOAAAAA!

Don't wanna hand out any SPOILERS to you readers who don't know about this HUNDRED AND SOMETHIN year old book, but THE SCARLET PIMPERNEL pretends to be an English FOP when he's not out rescuin' Frenchies from MADAM FREAKIN GUILLOTINE!

So read up and get some culture from this CLASSIC!

WHOOOOOOOAAAAA!

Allison Tebo says

Whew, I flew through this one - I was definitely pulled in from page one.

What I Liked:

Ah - I do love the old style of writing. After slogging through some modern writers recently, opening this

book was like slipping into warm and soothing water.

Can we just talk about the POV? It seems that only old writers can do the removed POV and still have some much incredible emotional impact. The emotional impact was palpable; I was almost choking a couple of times with the realness of Marguerite's panic. It was so beautifully, gosmackingly, wonderfully done. They just don't write like this anymore.

The style is great, more like poetry than modern writing and the 'language' is wonderful - extra points for using one of my favorite words (jackanapes) with delightful frequency.

The story; I don't think I have to say much here - pretty much everyone an agree that the league of gentlemen spies, up to their necks with noble causes and the thrill of the chase/hunt, the skullduggery, the intrigue, the rescues - what's not to like?

Now the characters: Of course, Sir Percy is a great character - there's no contest on that. I love those sorts of characters that are 'more than they appear.', and who doesn't love a dashing, mysterious, hero that operates behind the scenes? :)

I was really pleased with how much Marguerite had to do in the story and impressed with her character - I had expected her to be mostly languishing in the background as 'set decoration' - but she really displayed great gumption and brains. Even physically, she endured quite a lot. And yet, it all seemed quite believable to the time period. I liked that she didn't whip out a sword (thank goodness) and start acting like one of the guys - her motivations were one of desperation, she wasn't trying to fly in the face of convention just for the sake of being radical. 'thumbs up'.

The villain was also good, I liked the 'smallness' of how he was portrayed - instead of giving us this huge, Dark Lord type villain - I liked how the authoress emphasized how all that evil shrinks the person, reducing them to a horrible little package, a mere shade or shadow of what they once where as they give over more and more of themselves to the devil.

What I Didn't Like:

The ending, while sly and understated (usually something I liked) seemed abrupt to me and I was disappointed because I had my heart set on a good old fashioned confrontation and a Zorro-esque sword fight. I would have just preferred more swashbuckling over all, and less focus on the emotional side of the story - or rather, more action to balance out the emotional side of the story.

Emmuska Orczy seems to be the old version of those modern authors that weave unrealistic, romantic relationships that are destined to set readers up for disappointment in real life.

There seemed to be a lot of emphasis on the physical attraction the MCs felt for one another and their subsequent desire to possess one another. The words 'worship' and 'adoration' were used consistently throughout the book by each character. In one scene, Sir Percy actually goes down on his hands and knees to kiss the ground his wife walks on - this scene literally gave me the creeps and even gave me a nightmare afterwards (no kidding). I know this scene raises some strong feelings and controversy - but in my personal opinion - I have never seen the appeal in these effeminate type of demonstrations from men and the infatuation with having a slave instead of a husband. Now, I have been informed that this kind of worship for another human being is addressed as wrong in later books and I am open to looking for that in future reads - but this is just my summarization of what I have read so far.

Summary:

Overall, a fun and enjoyable read, and I look forward to joining the League and delving further into the Pimpernel's adventures.

Content: Rather heady romance (even if they are married), brief scene of affection between husband and wife, a fair amount of intense romantic contemplation about the MC's husband and of course the infamous scene of Sir Percy going down on his hands and knees to kiss the ground his wife has walked on. Some swearing and also a lot of English substitute swearing, such as 'Demmed' instead of 'damned' and 'Lud' instead of 'Lord'.

PirateSteve says

Odd's Fish ! Is this book an action adventure, a romance, historical fiction?

Baroness Orczy has provided us with all that.

Tis a fun romp, I say.

Had I known how much of this story was romance, I might not have read it but then I would have missed out on how good an all round story it really is.

Baroness Orczy was a playwright and this book was adapted into a play or the play was adapted into the book. I know not which was first.

It does have it's faults but still deserving of it's place in literary history.

Sir Percy Blakeney is an English dandy in his normal life. But it is when he takes on the guise as The Scarlet Pimpernel that he becomes a hero to the French aristocrats. Crossing the English channel on his yacht, The Day Dream, in order to save these aristocrats from their adjudged doom upon the guillotine. "Tally ho! - and away we go!"

This book's disguised hero story-line, first published in 1905, has been accredited with giving inspiration to several other literary heroes such as Batman, Zorro and The Shadow.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, Now I know not where those writers received their inspiration but surely there had been other, earlier, similar stories.

First comes to mind, The Bible. Josiah disguised himself in order to make war with Neco, King of Egypt.

This adventure didn't turn out good for Josiah. So close, but not quite.

Then I look to ol Willy Shakes. You gotta know Shakespeare couldn't, wouldn't leave this type story-line alone.

Measure for Measure, fitting title I believe, is a play written by Shakespeare back in 1603.

In this play Vincentio, the Duke of Vienna, lets everyone know that he is leaving the city on a diplomatic mission.

What he does then is stay in the city disguised as Friar Lodowick in order to observe the governing of the city in his absence.

At the end of the play The Duke reveals himself in order to save an innocent man from the guillotine.

Sara says

*They seek him here,
They seek him there,
Those Frenchies seek him everywhere.*

What fun! An old-fashioned rollicking romance, with dashing young cavaliers and twisted misunderstandings between lovers, set against the horrors of the French Reign of Terror. The Scarlet Pimpernel himself is slightly more daring and strong than his followers and clever enough to be an Oscar Wilde character.

I admit to not being surprised by a single turn of the storyline. I suspect that I saw this in movie form back in my childhood. But that hardly mattered. I loved the horrible predicaments Marguerite found herself in, the dastardly nature of Chevelin, and the unassailable British character of Sir Percy. Truth is, when we are young girls we dream of a man who is strong, handsome, owns a yacht, and will have eyes for no one but ourselves. Reading this novel made me feel young again.

Malia says

I have to admit, I just fell for the title of this book, The Scarlet Pimpernel just sounds like fun:-) As it happens, the story lives up to expectations. Set in the eighteenth century, the mysterious Scarlet Pimpernel is a notoriously secretive Englishman, who rescues French royals from the guillotine. The story is told from the point of view of Marguerite, a French woman married to an English aristocrat, Percy Blakeney. Her marriage is unhappy, because her husband is ignoring her after having discovered a mistake she made in her youth. Yet when an old enemy, Chauvelin, tries to blackmail her, she has no choice but to seek help. One way or another, she becomes wrapped up in the clever mystery that surrounds the actions of the Scarlet Pimpernel and his league of cohorts.

This is a fun read, surprisingly humorous at times and quite clever. I would recommend it to fans of historical adventure novels, or writers like Dumas. It is an engaging romp through a notably dark time in Europe's history, and done in a manner that does not diminish the sad truth of the situation, but neither does it get bogged down in depressing details.

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Piyangie says

[The story is set up in the back drop of the Reign of Terror in France in the aftermath of French revolution; and the author creates a story of a fictitious small league of British aristocrats led by one named the "The Scarlet Pimpernel" who help smuggle the French royals and aristocrats in to the safety of England away from the hands of vengeful French Repu

Tadiana ☆Night Owl? says

I've always had a thing for books that use the Scarlet Pimpernel trope: the intelligent, capable person who hides behind a mask of inanity. So Emma Orczy gets extra points from me for popularizing this secret identity plot device in her 1905 book *The Scarlet Pimpernel*.

It's 1792, the early days of the French Revolution, and the Reign of Terror is at its peak: thousands of French aristocrats, men, women and children, are sent to the guillotine, regardless of actual fault. But a group of brave English noblemen, led by the mysterious Scarlet Pimpernel, are rescuing many of the condemned

French aristocrats and spiriting them away to England. French authorities are outraged.

Meanwhile, Marguerite St. Just, a lovely French actress who inexplicably married the slow-witted, foppish but extremely wealthy Sir Percy Blakeney, is having issues in her marriage: she thought her rather foolish husband adored her, but they've drifted far apart, ever since she confessed to him that her accusation against a French noble family resulted in their deaths, while being too proud to explain the whole story to him. She's not quite sure why, but now she finds she misses the adoration of the big galoot.

But Marguerite has worse problems: the French envoy to England is blackmailing her into spying for him, so he can find out who the Scarlet Pimpernel is and make sure he dies the next time he sets foot in France. If she doesn't cooperate, her beloved brother Armand will be guillotined.

This is an old-fashioned adventure/romance novel, not terribly deep but an easy, enjoyable read, for a hundred year old book anyway. It occasionally gets high on the melodrama (I about lost it when Sir Percy (view spoiler)) and it's incurably pro-aristocracy, though Baroness Orczy reluctantly admits that some of the French nobility had caused much suffering for the common people. And Marguerite, for a person who's supposed to be the cleverest woman on two continents, sure got smacked hard on the head by the Oblivious Fairy's wand.

But the exploits of the Scarlet Pimpernel and his merry band are well-plotted and exciting to read, and the romantic relationship is unusual: can two married people who don't really understand each other and have become estranged, ever work things out?

I totally got sucked into it and was all, d'awww! at the end. Good times!

Joseph says

The book was not what I was expecting, but I was pleasantly surprised. I was expecting a dark and bloody story of the French Revolution, but instead I was introduced to James Bond's great great grandfather. A good action story for the time it was written and of course it is who tries to save the day. The story reads like an old movie serial, fast moving story line, likeable (and hate-able) characters all in the right places. Good read for a weekend.

Adita ?The Slumbering Insomniac? says

★★★★★★★★★?[9/10]

Ah, *classic*.

How I had always imagined that the classics are only for those who are born, brought up, spoon-fed in and

potty-trained in English and how wrong was I to think that they are out of the reach of people like me who had only subnormal command over the English language.

Among many other popular authors of the classic era, **Emmuska Orczy** was a name much bandied about for her magnum opus, "**The Scarlet Pimpernel**", even during my school days. I can't quite pinpoint the exact reason why I was motivated to choose this book as the *first proper classic novel* that I will ever read, but it sure delivered the necessary impact that made me change my course of this book journey of my life and embrace the uphill task of delving into the treasure trove of works left behind by the writers of yonder and unearth the hidden riches of the literature world that I have so far eschewed.

This story describes the many facets of the post-revolution France and the ripples that reflected off from places as far as London. The story is written in a simple, lucid style and the narrative is very straightforward and candid, that never once did I feel like I am in the middle of a momentous undertaking as this one.

? A MYSTERY, BUT NOT QUITE:

The story traces the mysterious ways of one *enigmatic Englishman* who works under the sobriquet of The Scarlet Pimpernel and plots ingenious ways to bring back the doomed aristocrats from the very verge of death to the safety of the English hospitality. Throughout the first half, we are left to our own devices to hazard a guess as to who this Scarlet Pimpernel could be and the sense of bewilderment ties you to the story to the hilt. After all, you have been hearing about this titular character for ages and you are only a few hours away from learning the true identity of this much celebrated hero of all ages.

On a parallel timeline, you are treated to the boisterous and always-in-the-spotlight kind of life of Lady Blakeney aka **Marguerite St. Just** who is popular equally among the intelligentsia and the fashionistas of the 18th century London and her ridiculously rich but inanely infectious (laughter along with other attributes) husband **Sir Percy Blakeney**. Her undulating affections for Sir Percy- ranging from utter hatred for his foolish ways to unconditional love for the worshipper in him- keep us riveted to the story; in an effort to help us understand which direction a witty woman's feelings for a dim-witted husband should swing towards.

? A THRILLER BUT NOT QUITE:

The beginning of the second part is what should be the one to reveal the identity of the RESCUER-EXTRAORDINAIRE himself. This is where Lady Blakeney is unwittingly fooled into aiding in the capture of The Scarlet Pimpernel by the evil French official **Monsieur Chauvelin**, who used to be her close associate during her young days in France, in return for her beloved brother Armand's life. Her arduous journey in (a league member) Sir Andrew Ffoulkes' company to save her loved ones or die alongside them trying presents to us the typical dilemma of choosing one of two equally valuable things and that's why this novel is worthy of being hailed as one of the *finest precursors to the modern day whodunits*, even though the dearth of a multitude of characters made it easy for the readers to zero in on the suspect (not in the usual life-taker sense, but in the unusual life saver sense). Oh, and you wouldn't quite believe how the quirky masks and strange countenances helped our dashing hero to slip away right from under the nose of his archenemy.

That this novel is a wonderful commentary on love, family, gallantry, friendship, loyalty, commitment and betrayal in the times of turmoil comes as no surprise to me. But, if "**simple**" could move me so much, in this age where there is a tendency among people to complicate things, and usher in a paradigm shift in my reading habit, then I owe it to this brilliant, elegant yet plain prose. And this story makes **hero-worshipping** only that much better.

PS: If you read my review, you'd notice that I have left a clue as to who the eponymous Scarlet Pimpernel is. Gah, the joy of giving away to the world the secret identity of someone you know!! Human nature is century- independent, huh?

Meredith Holley says

I've watched quite a few episodes of *Scooby Doo*, *The Road Runner*, and *Looney Tunes* in my time, so a lot of the twists and turns in this story were spoiled for me long before I started listening to this book. Also, for many years, after I first heard the title of this book in high school, I thought it was called *The Scarlet Pumpernickel*, which always sounded rather disgusting to me. Who wants their bread to be the color of blood? Not this girl. And I don't even particularly care for normal-colored pumpernickel. Instead, it turns out to be a pretty red flower like on the cover of this version of the book:

So, that's a mercy. I don't really want to read about a hero whose signature is a red loaf of bread. YOU GUYS!! This is why I thought it was the Scarlet Pumpernickel!!! My relationship with this book was doomed from childhood.

You're a book!

I can't even remember who does this, but I know I used to be around someone a lot who, when she would meet an animal or a baby, she would tell it what it was. "You're a dog!!" "You're a girl!!" Like, if there were a lull in the conversation she was having with that particular person or animal. "You're a boy!!" I do this now. That was kind of how I felt about this book. When I was listening to it, the only real thought I had was, "You're a book!" That's for dang certain. This story was a book.

There were a lot of boring parts in this story, like when it's going onnnnn and onnnnn about how charming and noble English people are and how fucked up bloody revolution is, but especially because the French are fucked up. Or how, remember now kids, wimmins is just intuitive and mens is just gallant. So boring. In general, there is a lot of boring nationalism, sexism, and anti-Semitism in the story. And there's not a lot to make up for it. Also, there was a lot of telling about how freaking smart Marguerite St. Just was, but she fell for traps and mistaken identity bullshit that the road runner *never* would have fallen for. So, I had to doubt the scale on which we were measuring her intelligence. It seemed like it was probably the "intuitive woman" scale, and everybody knows that's rigged.

There was one part, though, that I really loved. Marguerite and Percy get home from the ball, and it's the part where she confronts him about the rift in their marriage. I thought it was beautiful. I think that, no, if a man acts like he doesn't like you, he probably actually doesn't like you and is probably not hiding his secret passion for you, but still, their conversation and their tension caught me all up. More of that! His denial of all coldness and his evasiveness, even while the coldness was obvious, but his underlying passion and her perception of it, was nicely done. Nevertheless, it seems like a few good, honest talks the year before could have at least spared everyone, including the loving couple, some strenuous eye-rolling. And two people living together who despise each other: brrrr. Maybe it is usually because of serious misunderstandings, but in my opinion, sometimes people just don't like each other. The Blakeney's dodged more than one bullet in this story.

I wish I could tell you exactly what Percy said that seemed so smart, but I listened to this on audio, so it is all a vague impression to me. I think that was a good choice because I could tune out for a little while and still be chapters and chapters ahead of the obvious revelations the book was prepping me for. If I had read this when I was twelve, I think it would have been a favorite, but really, too much Loony Tunes or Agatha Christie, or something, has ruined me. Anyway, it was a lovely audio, though. I'm glad I decided to listen

rather than read this one.

Shannon (Giraffe Days) says

If, like me, you watched the movie more times than you'd care to admit when you were growing up; or if, like me, you've read all of Georgette Heyer's Regency romances and then some, you'll love this book. It doesn't pretend to be anything extraordinary, it doesn't even offer a social commentary on the period in which it's set - written by an aristocrat who is clearly on the side of the aristocrats, it's easy to see where her sympathies lie. But it is a rollicking good ride, a fun adventure story, a very sweet and at times intense love story, and a daring, cunning dash into danger. For sheer entertainment's sake, I loved it.

Set in 1792 during the French Revolution when, if your history is a bit hazy, the French people rose up in revolt and began executing their wealthy aristocracy on "Madame Guillotine" - including the King and Marie Antoinette (their young son was famously unaccounted for, if I remember correctly) - stories of "innocent" aristocrats (especially women and children, who were beheaded alongside the men) being rescued and taken to England are perfect for a romantic adventure story.

When I was a little girl, my mother's best friend returned from a trip to Russia, where her family was from, with a birthday gift for me - a book printed in Yugoslavia called *Girls' Adventure Stories of Long Ago*. The very first story, and my favourite, was about a young girl fleeing France who is rescued by a Englishman with a secret identity, going by the name of Red Hawk. Adventure and romance ensued. So between that story and watching my sister's copy of *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, I was an early fan.

Lady Marguerite Blakeney is a beautiful, clever young French woman, once an actress, now wife to Sir Percy Blakeney, one of the richest and most well-dressed men in England - and also, so everyone thinks, one of the most inane and stupid. When her brother Armand, who is working on the side of the Revolution in France, is found out to be in league with the Scarlet Pimpernel, the man in charge of hunting down the Pimpernel, Chauvelin, uses the damning knowledge to blackmail Marguerite into helping him discover the Scarlet Pimpernel's true identity. When she realises who the Scarlet Pimpernel really is, though, it's too late to save him or her brother - she must to France to warn them, but Chauvelin's trap is closing in fast.

Originally written for the stage in 1902 by Baroness Orczy, it became so popular that she novelised it a few years later. In the 1982 film, Anthony Andrews - while lacking the impressive height and shoulder breadth described of Sir Percy in the book - did a fantastic job of portraying the urbane fop who hides his cunning and resourceful mind behind a mask of stupidity. I can think of a couple of heroes Georgette Heyer wrote who were likely inspired by Sir Percy. He is wonderfully charismatic, and the love he suppresses for his wife ever since he found out her role in the execution of an aristocrat, makes for a truly bittersweet romance. They both must learn to trust one another and work through misunderstandings in order to be happy again.

The pacing might be too slow for some readers, but I found the details engrossing and the build-up of tension and anticipation gut-tightening. While the first half of the book was recreated closely in the movie, the second half is quite different. It was a pleasurable surprise, and made the book less predictable than I was expecting. It might not have the cinematic build-up of the movie, or that final classic sword-fight between Percy and Chauvelin, but I found the original ending to be just as satisfying and far less clichéd. The characters are well-drawn and feel very real; we mostly get Marguerite's perspective (never Percy's), and while she doesn't always make the best decisions, she is at least understandable and even sympathetic. The true hero is, of course, the Scarlet Pimpernel, whose modern equivalent would be Batman - a superhero without superpowers, unless you count enormous wealth and a sharp mind.

Duane says

This novel is set in 1792 in England and France during the French Revolution's "Reign of Terror". In spite of the time and seriousness of these events, the novel doesn't take itself too seriously. Baroness Orczy wasn't trying to be political or make a statement, she was just trying to write a good story. What she wrote was a rollicking bit of a mystery/adventure/intrigue that was (for me) surprisingly good.

The story is about an unknown, but gallant, Englishman and his secret band of followers who sneak into France and save French citizen's, mostly aristocrats, from the blade of the guillotine, and then shepherd them safely to England. The book is not overly long and is not your typical English classic, but I thoroughly enjoyed it.

4 stars

Henry Avila says

When the guillotine dropped quickly, remorselessly, and often, there arose a mysterious Englishman, who crossed the channel, to rescue the French Aristocrats (mostly innocent victims), he called himself, "The Scarlet Pimpernel" . Named after a modest, British flower, this person organized a band of twenty high-born men, he like the flower, was unpretentious . Their daring deeds, thrilled the world, Antoine Fouquier-Tinville, director of the French government, wants to capture these enemies. Offers 5,000 francs, for the head, of the unknown leader. But the brilliant Pimpernel, has supernatural powers, they say...The Terror was just beginning, Sir Percy Blakeney, is a rather silly, unintelligent, fop (everyone thought so). Percy travels in High Society, his friend , is the Prince of Wales, similar men, are his young followers, and copy all Blakeney's latest clothes, he wears. Recite his witty words, the riches man in England, was surprisingly, the secret chief, of this group of daredevils, in France...Having recently married a French actress, Marguerite St. Just, the most beautiful, smart woman in the country . All her friends, were stunned, she had many suitors, love of money, undoubtedly was the reason. A hard, precarious childhood, Marguerite and her older brother, Armand, endured, as they lost their parents, at an early age. Unusually close, they depended on each other to survive, but still, how can she, lower herself to such a nitwit dandy? With an irritating laugh ? Her many friends, can't accept it...In Paris the barricades, surround the city, everyone leaving, is thoroughly searched. Their carts, barrels, animals, all that goes by, particularly the frightened citizens, the fleeing aristocrats, can't get out. An old, ugly woman, approaches the western barricades, the cart will not be searched, her grandson has the plague, she says...The guards, back away and the vehicle slowly passes, into the countryside, never to be seen again. Yes, The Scarlet Pimpernel, is the old woman, and some nobles are hidden, in the wagon. Sir Percy is a master of disguise, it will save his life, numerous times. The Committee of Safety, the notorious Revolutionary French government, sends an agent to England, to find out, the identity of this Scarlet Pimpernel. Such a silly name ! Citizen Chauvelin , the spy, is also an accredited official, of the bloody, French regime, and a former friend of Lady Blakeney. When her brave brother, or foolish, Armand, working for her husband, in France, to help some Aristocrats escape, is apprehended. The "Day Dream", Sir Percy's yacht, which has been used, often, to get them, across the sea, back to freedom (England), needs to sail in the opposite direction . But now the ruthless Chauvelin, threatens to kill Armand, if Lady Blakeney, doesn't find out who is the Scarlet Pimpernel...And she is in the dark, that her despised, idiot of a husband, is that person! Will Marguerite, have to choose between her husband and her beloved brother , one must die ? Appearances are not always reality, as this book shows. A man wears a mask, for the world, but inside, he is a totally different animal.

Britany says

The Scarlet Pimpernel is a secret force rescuing those imprisoned and sentenced to the guillotine in France. He rescues those and saves them from death bringing them to the English countryside where they can continue to live a full life. Monsieur Chauvelin is charged with discovering the identity of this French foe and arresting him. We get an inside perspective of that of Marguerite Blakeney, whose brother is in peril.

I quite enjoyed this novel. Suspense was easily crafted and held my attention to the very end of the book, when I had to know who the pimpernel was and if he would manage to get caught by the French authorities and what to become of my dear Marguerite. Great novel, up until the very end. I have to admit I was disappointed in the ending-- quite anticlimactic (in my opinion). They brought the novel full circle and maybe I missed something, but this just left me feeling a teensy bit annoyed.
