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In their introduction to this anthology, James Bruce Ross and Mary Martin McLaughlin remind us that "no area of the past is dead if we are alive to it. The variety, the complexity, the sheer humanity of the middle ages live most meaningfully in their own authentic voices." **The Portable Medieval Reader** assembles an entire chorus of those voices—of kings, warriors, prelates, merchants, artisans, chroniclers, and scholars—that together convey a lively, intimate impression of a world that might otherwise seem immeasurably alien.

All the aspects and strata of medieval society are represented here: the life of monasteries and colleges, the codes of knighthood, the labor of peasants and the privileges of kings. There are contemporary accounts of the persecution of Jews and heretics, of the Crusades in the Holy Land, of courtly pageants, popular uprisings, and the first trade missions to Cathay. We find Chaucer, Petrarch, Boccaccio, Saint Francis of Assisi, Thomas Aquinas and Abelard alongside a host of lesser-known writers, discoursing on all the arts, knowledge and speculation of their time. The result, according to the **Columbia Record**, is a broad and eminently readable "cross section of source history and literature...as rich and varied as a stained glass window."

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