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BLIX

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Frank Norris : Blix before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Blix:

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. A light-hearted romance from one of America's best novelistsBy Karl JanssenThe cryptically titled Blix is an early novel by the great American writer Frank Norris. Originally published in 1899, it is probably his least-known work. Later that same year he published the novel McTeague, a now highly regarded masterwork that was controversial for its time. While McTeague put Norris on the map as a force to be reckoned with in American letters, the unassuming Blix was most likely forgotten soon after its publication. Nevertheless, this obscure novel from the early years of Norris's brief but illustrious career displays ample evidence of his characteristic excellence as a storyteller.Travis Bessemer is an attractive young woman of 19, mature for her age and independent-minded for her time. She resides with her father, a widower, in a moderately well-off home in San Francisco, where she helps to raise her younger sister and brother. She enjoys the companionship of a 28-year-old suitor, Condy Rivers, who bears some resemblance to a young Frank Norris, in that he writes hack articles for a local

paper while waiting for his big break as a fiction writer. Although they have been a couple for about eighteen months, Travis forces Condyl to admit that the two don't really love each other, and that they should stop pretending they will be married some day and simply be friends. She also decides to renounce her membership in San Francisco society, turning her back on the debutante balls and society teas that have tediously occupied so much of her time. Determined to find her own means of enjoying life, she invites Condyl along for the ride, as chums only. The two then embark on a series of unconventional adventures, such as spending a leisurely afternoon in a Chinese tea house or embarking on their first fishing trip. The more Travis enjoys her nonconformist lifestyle, the more independent she becomes, and, not surprisingly, the more she becomes her own woman, the more Condyl falls in love with her. Though the subject matter of *Blix* is quite frivolous in comparison to the life-and-death struggles one encounters in Norris novels like *The Octopus* and *McTeague*, for what it is--a story of two young people enjoying one another's company--*Blix* is actually quite good. There's not a great deal of conflict here, but the reader finds a pleasant joy in sharing in the enthusiasm of the two main characters as they go about their humble adventures. To his credit, Norris treats this story with the same naturalistic precision that he imparts to all his novels. His vividly detailed descriptions of a sunset over San Francisco Bay, the bustling streets of Chinatown, or even the wares on display at a sporting goods store show an observational gift worthy of his literary idol Emile Zola. Here and there the Norris fan can find scenes that would go on to be repurposed and reused in later works, like a scene of wheat being loaded onto a cargo ship that reads like it's straight out of *The Octopus*. One major drawback to *Blix* is the annoying century-old slang which Condyl spews forth with each and every sentence. A few chapters into the book, he gives Travis the nickname "Blix," apropos of nothing, and the reader is stuck with it for the rest of the book. The novel also unfortunately bears a weak final chapter, which is too convenient and conventional for the book that precedes it. In its entirety, however, *Blix* is a well-crafted, fun, and engaging little romance. It doesn't deliver the shock and awe of a Norris masterpiece, but those who have enjoyed his other works, or naturalist literature in general, won't regret plucking this novel from obscurity and giving it a try.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. so I enjoyed the depiction of the city back then. By Overthehill. This takes place in San Francisco in the 1890's, and I live in SF, so I enjoyed the depiction of the city back then, but the writing is amateurish, and the story is thin. I suspect it was Norris's first novel, published to take advantage of his later fame.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Good look at San Francisco in 1890's. By Henry A. Filippone. Good look at San Francisco in 1890's. A young gentleman and proper girl fall in love. Only men write real love stories: i.e., *Bridges of Madison County*.

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About the Author Frank Norris was an American author who wrote primarily in the naturalist genre, focusing on the impact of corruption and turn-of-the-century capitalism on common people. Best known for his novel *McTeague* and for the first two parts of his unfinished *The Epic of the Wheat* trilogy *The Octopus: A Story of California* and *The Pit*, Norris wrote prolifically during his lifetime. Following his education at the Académie Julian in Paris, University of California, Berkeley, and at Harvard University, Norris worked as a news correspondent for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and covered the Spanish-American War in Cuba for McClure's Magazine. Norris died suddenly in 1902 of peritonitis, leaving *The Wolf: A Story of Empire*, the final part of his *Wheat* trilogy, incomplete.