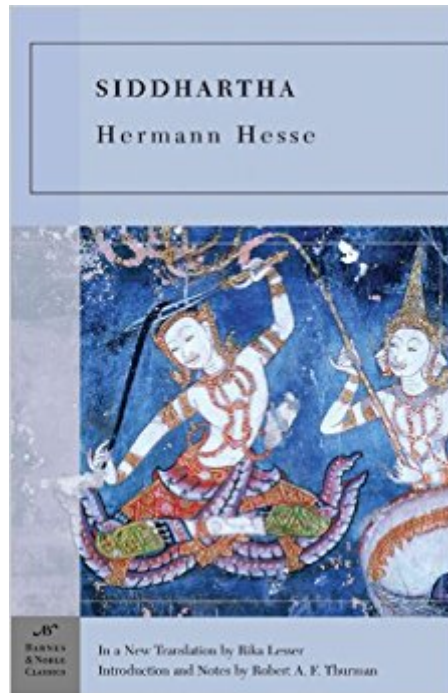


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# Siddhartha (Barnes & Noble Classics)



## Synopsis

Siddhartha, by Hermann Hesse, is part of the Barnes & Noble Classics<sup>®</sup> series, which offers quality editions at affordable prices to the student and the general reader, including new scholarship, thoughtful design, and pages of carefully crafted extras. Here are some of the remarkable features of Barnes & Noble Classics: New introductions commissioned from today's top writers and scholars Biographies of the authors Chronologies of contemporary historical, biographical, and cultural events Footnotes and endnotes Selective discussions of imitations, parodies, poems, books, plays, paintings, operas, statuary, and films inspired by the work Comments by other famous authors Study questions to challenge the reader's viewpoints and expectations Bibliographies for further reading Indices & Glossaries, when appropriate All editions are beautifully designed and are printed to superior specifications; some include illustrations of historical interest. Barnes & Noble Classics pulls together a constellation of influences—biographical, historical, and literary—to enrich each reader's understanding of these enduring works.

One of the most widely read novels of the twentieth century, Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha* explores the struggle of the soul to see beyond the illusions of humankind and achieve a deeper wisdom through spirituality. Born into wealth and privilege, Siddhartha renounces his place among India's nobility to wander the countryside in search of meaning. He learns suffering and self-denial among a group of ascetics before meeting the Buddha and coming to realize that true peace cannot be taught: It must be experienced. Changing his path yet again, Siddhartha reenters human society and earns a great fortune. Yet over time this life leaves Siddhartha restless and empty. He achieves enlightenment only when he stops searching and surrenders to the oneness of all.

Rika Lesser's new translation deftly evokes the lyricism and quiet beauty of Hesse's novel, which first appeared in German in 1922. At once personal and universal, *Siddhartha* stands outside of time, resonating in the hearts of truth-seekers everywhere.

Robert A. F. Thurman holds the first endowed chair in Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Studies in the United States, the Jey Tsong Khapa Chair at Columbia University. The first American to be ordained a Tibetan monk, he has been a student and friend of His Holiness the Dalai Lama for forty years. Thurman is the author of numerous books, most recently *Infinite Life: Seven Virtues for Living Well*.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

From Robert A. F. Thurman's Introduction to *Siddhartha* "I first read *Siddhartha* at the very start of the 1960s, and I can still remember the powerful inspiration it gave me. Why would a young person seeking to escape from wasp-hood at Harvard turn to India as the mother of inner exploration, when nothing in Western education would indicate that India was a source of great explorations in the quest for some transcendent truth? Clearly, *Siddhartha* was a model for my own journeys, for my own development of his vaunted skills at

fasting; waiting; thinking. "Looking into Hesse's personal life, I was astonished to discover many parallels between the troubled youth of this great psychic explorer, poet, critic, novelist, painter, and gardener who wandered the world before World War I and finally fled from the Rhineland down to southern Switzerland, and that of my own more humble and less accomplished self, hailing from Manhattan and traveling more or less on foot to India my first time out in 1961. At fifteen Hesse began to rebel against his strict Pietistic father and mother and the mission school they placed him in; he never felt comfortable in conventional German society of the time. Some of us—certainly myself, and I think Hesse, too—though born in the West, tend to wander as if doomed to exile and always feel like a stranger in a strange land. "For both of us, forty-plus years and another World War apart, Mother India was a salve, a home, for our wandering spirits. Why? Is it because India's civilization alone has had the wisdom to open itself up truly to embrace the naturally homeless? Hesse himself had this to say about India: "For example, with my Indian journey I had an unforgettable experience. At first it was a real disappointment, I returned completely downcast. But almost ten years later, as I was writing *Siddhartha*, suddenly the Indian memories were extremely

precious and positive, and the little disappointment of earlier on was extinguished.<sup>1</sup> *Siddhartha* was published in German in 1922. Its first English translation was published in 1951.

*Siddhartha*'s quest was an important model for the whole postwar generation's seeking of 'Enlightenment in the East.' For Hesse himself, the book articulates a complex of strands in his character. It shows his rich appreciation for India conceived in a specific Western way, inherited from his missionary grandfather and parents. He says: 'And this learned and wise grandfather had not only Indian books and scrolls, but also shelves full of exotic wonders, not only coconut shells and strange birds' eggs, but also wooden and bronze idols and animals, silken paintings and a whole cabinet stuffed with Indian cloths and robes in all materials and colors. . . . All this was part of my childhood, not less than the fir-trees of the Black Forest, the Nagold river, or the Gothic chapel on the bridge.' *Siddhartha* is distinguished by Hesse's consummate artistic, spiritual, and poetic sense of the high transcendent experiences and values accessible through the Indian 'inner sciences' and 'mind yogas.' At the same time, the book contains a certain European, world-weary cynicism and a sense of the inevitable faultiness of all religious paths. Hesse again: 'At the age of thirty, I was a Buddhist, of course not in the church-sense of the word.' The book hums with Hesse's pursuit of Christian, Tolstoyan nonviolence and the inner kingdom, all the while roiled from within by its opposite: his own driving inner violence, his volcanic sensuality, and his deep despair of fulfilling human relations; a despair that stemmed from his ambivalent struggles with his parents and his ups and downs with his first wife and three sons. Rereading *Siddhartha* now, I can clearly see its influence on my decision at twenty to leave college and the study of Western literature, philosophy, and psychology, and seek a higher enlightenment in India. More than forty years later, I have gone back and forth from 'the West' to 'the East' so many times I can hardly tell the difference anymore, though I observe certain groups still struggling to maintain the 'never the twain shall meet' sort of attitude. Having trod a little bit in both of the *Siddhartha*'s footprints in my own small way, I appreciate the book even more. I can now unravel the tangled threads of Hesse's mixing of Hindu and Buddhist worldviews, his entrapment in some of the stereotyped views of 'the East' that were almost inescapable for a man of his time and culture, and his romantic depiction of Buddhist/Hindu enlightenment as a kind of return to nature, a resignation to the flow of the great river of life. In spite of this creative Hindu/Buddhist mixing, I enjoy the book much more now than I ever could have in my youth. Hesse seems to have been haunted by a keen insight into the human condition, and his work seems to mark a great turning point in the growth of a genuine

European respect for the civilization of enlightenment that developed in ancient India. He himself loved nothing more than to leave hearth and home and wander south to Italy with artistic friends, the European version of a sadhu (Hindu ascetic). He slept in bed-and-breakfasts or camped alfresco, contemplated nature and art, and took a break from the routine chores of householding in northern Europe (very likely overburdening his high-strung wife with their three sons). But it was hard to wander with open mind and heart and intellect in the Europe of that time, so he also went to India and southeast Asia. His keen artist's perception saw there that the complex fabric of the culture of India was rich enough and its weave loose enough to accommodate all manner of eccentrics, wandering here and there, always on some spiritual pilgrimage or other, seeking beauty or peace, magical energy or complete transcendence. At this moment in my journey, I am very pleased to have the chance to introduce Siddhartha to a new generation, since I think it still has the power to inspire the seeker of higher truth. I do not pretend to evaluate Hesse's great achievement from some higher vantage of supposed enlightenment, which I do not claim for myself. But I have put in a bit of study of enlightenment's various forms and levels, the institutions and cultural orientations it has supported in various countries, and the high civilizations it ultimately created. And following Siddhartha's inspiration more than forty years ago, I did make a bit of progress; just enough to know that, as elusive as it continues to be, enlightenment is still highly worth pursuing.

Siddhartha is a great book. This edition, however, is perhaps the worst edition of any book that I have ever--ever--seen published. The number of typos, grammatical mistakes, syntax errors, and other errors is astounding. The publishing house, Simon & Brown, should be embarrassed and ashamed.

A beautiful, haunting novel of spiritual growth and development. Hesse was a talented writer who explored some of the pulsing questions of life. His book on his experience in school, *Beneath the Wheel*, is one of my favorites. *Siddhartha* is probably the work to start with when reading Hesse (it's one of his most well-known), if not *Demian* or *Steppenwolf* before working up to *The Glassbead Game*. What makes this story so engaging (without sharing too much) is the way the ending reflects the beginning. This narrative arch marks this book as a masterwork and calls the reader to question long after reading.

In a burst of nostalgia, I bought this kindle edition of Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha*. "Nostalgia"

because we read it in 3rd semester (intermediate) German class quite long ago and, in fact, that's one book I kept because I knew it was a classic. I also bought Siddhartha in a burst of hope, because more recently I'd actually been able to read and appreciate some of Hesse's poetry my former housemate brought home from one of his jaunts to the downtown German language library. So I read Siddhartha. Again. As a designer and as a theologian, despite being very much into symbol, meaning, sign, and word, I still don't quite get the profound import of this book. I clearly remember my German Professor's "I am humanist" declarations; I also recall a friend telling me how much she'd enjoyed reading Siddhartha in English, and envied that I'd read it in German. I fully expected being a few years older would increase my appreciation, but it didn't. However, I'm still happy to own this digital edition, and I encourage you to read Siddhartha for yourself, in either a good translation or in Hermann Hesse's original German.

I received a copy of the then-current paperback edition of this book as a gift from a close friend in 1965, and have cherished it ever since. The edition you are reading about here is a larger-format reproduction of that edition. I gave it recently as a gift to a friend, and found it to be an excellent reading format. Hesse's writing style is simple and direct, and this is an easy read once the reader gets into the author's rhythm. Keep in mind this is a short novel, not intended as a literal history of The Bhudda or Bhuddism.

I bought a kindle version and a matching audible. Yes, I do agree that there are quite a few grammatical errors and typos. Instead of complaining, please be grateful to the translator(s). At the very least, we can read Siddhartha, otherwise. Could we imagine what we missed if Siddhartha was never translated into English in the first place? Let us look at the problems involved grammatical errors and typos from a different point of view. Without grammatical errors and typos, we perhaps read through the text, enjoy it, and then soon forget it. Yes, a good feeling about the book does linger in our mind, but the wisdom from the book probably does not retain in our heart longer than the moment we put the book back on our bookshelf. Because I re-read and re-read, I truly appreciate Hermann Hesse and the translator(s). Thank you so much for making Siddhartha available to the readers in the U.S. Maybe, this is the only way that the translator(s) can encourage the readers to re-read the book again and again. Everything comes with a price :) Please enjoy all moments of re-reading . . .

Not to be rude but I don't think many of us should be critiquing the writing of Hermann Hesse.

Wasn't it Alexander Pope who said: "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread"? As to the book -- it really does have the potential to change your life. Really.

Informative and imaginative and pedantic telling of the life of Siddhartha. I love his use of the river and the water cycle to convey wisdom. I like the rebellious nature of Siddhartha, here. I like how inspired I am to consider a different perspective on the things I'm working on now. I read this book at age 15 and just finished it again at age 55. It spoke to me then and it fascinates me now. It's clearly fiction and not entirely based on any particular strain of Buddhism but it illuminates many Buddhist concepts in story form. As far as I know this is one of the earliest west meets east revelations written in fiction. It's worth the read!

I have read this book a number of times, and it always presents a different face. Of course the book doesn't change, but it reaches across time to speak to you in different voices. If you are on your own search for truth there isn't a better book to take with you. Education, asceticism, luxury, working for others - wherever you are in life, you can always "try a little bit harder to be a little bit better." Unfortunately, this version of Siddhartha contains huge amount of typographical errors. Missing articles (a, an, the) and goofs such as "out" instead of "our." If you've read Siddhartha before, you can stumble through this edition. If this is your first reading, SKIP this one and order the paperback. The errors don't effect the actual meaning of the story - much - but they are numerous enough to be annoying and a bit confusing.

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