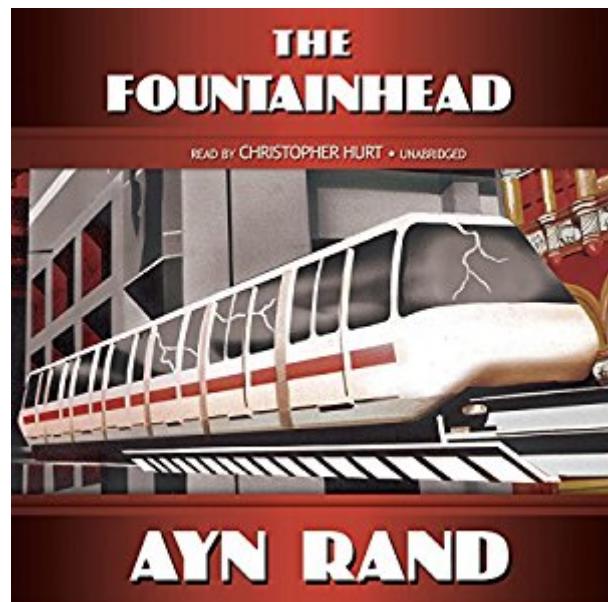


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The Fountainhead



Synopsis

'The Fountainhead' is one of the greatest books of its time. In it you will meet, head-on, the brilliant young architect Howard Roark. You will witness the beauty, desirability and dangerous ambition of Dominique Francon. You will reel, stunned, like the millions of other readers who have assured this book a place in the century's history, at the meeting, and mating of these two most powerful creatures in modern America. 'The Fountainhead' is about ambition, power, gold and love ? a love so firm that it triumphed over slander, separation, jealousy, and the cruel assaults of those who sought to destroy it. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is one of the fastest paced books I have ever read. Ayn Rand's characters come to life as she paints very clear pictures of who they are and what they represent. She does this in spite of the fact that the dialogue is sometimes a bit wooden and stilted. In this novel, she sets forth her philosophy of "objectivism." She exposes those, such as a character named Peter Keating, an architect, who seemingly achieve greatness by copying others but somehow give the illusion of originality and creativity. In order to achieve "greatness," Keating was literally willing to sell anything, including his wife. Thus despite wealth and apparent achievement, his life was empty. Rand begins to formulate her values that altruism is an evil because a society which seeks to achieve this must do so at someone's expense and therefore leads to collectivism. In the person of Ellsworth Toohey, a flamboyant newspaper columnist, she shows how the power hungry manipulate the masses by setting a standard of mediocrity which fosters collectivism. This book is full of passion, including a

flaming, complex romantic affair between individualist architect Howard Roarke and socialite Dominique Francon. Their relationship develops from one in which they each seek to assert power over the other while achieving sexual release to one of true love between genuine soul mates. Roarke also has a passion for his work and is uncompromising in his creativity in accomplishing his professional goals. He will not ever compromise these goals despite enormous pressures to do so. Rand believed that there is only black and white in moral issues; there is no gray. Therefore, giving in a little is not compromise but rather, selling out your values and giving in to evil.

Read just about any four or five star customer review and you have a fine summary of this book. It is not necessary for me to repeat what has already been said. I myself would like to talk about the individual characters which keep me rereading this book as much as the philosophy does. Roark, Keating, Toohey (shudder), Dominique, etc., all represent facets of humanity, good and evil. But characters like Keating and Wynand are more complex than the characters in *Atlas Shrugged*. Yes, they are Randian archetypes but they have taught me much about human nature. Keating, had he a little more backbone, might have actually been able to make something of himself. Unlike the villains of *AS*, he was somewhat sympathetic. He was in love with Catherine, a woman who may not have possessed the glamor and poise of Dominique but who was right for him simply because they were happy when they were together. Fool that he was, he instead opted for what he thought he was supposed to, just as he chose architecture over his true calling, painting. His story is a lesson for all of us. To detractors of the book who call it contemptuous of people I say you don't HAVE to be this way. Don't be a Peter Keating. It is up to you. Ellsworth Toohey is a villain for the ages, somebody you just love to hate. I won't even describe him as a man. I relish the creepy, slimy feeling I get rereading the passages about him. Every patronizing, smarmy sentence that comes out of his mouth is designed to make one cringe. The fact that he DOESN'T seek out wealth, or even happiness, makes him all the worse. It is through him and this book that I learned what is evil: holding society and "the greater good" over the individual.

Funny how most of the reviews are either unqualified adulation from Rand worshipers or slams from Rand haters. IMO, "The Fountainhead" is neither a prophetic work of great genius nor a piece of evil tripe. It is a brilliant work, perhaps even with flashes of genius -- but as flawed as its author. I think Rand had the potential to be a great novelist, which she largely ruined when she decided she was the world's greatest philosopher since Aristotle. Any dogma is the enemy of art. If you read Rand's three major novels -- "We the Living", "The Fountainhead", and "Atlas Shrugged" -- you can see her

dogma becoming more and more rigid, and her characters less and less human. "The Fountainhead" is a novel you can still appreciate even if you don't agree with the philosophy (and I think the philosophy has some excellent points, just taken to an absurd extreme).[SPOILERS FOLLOW BELOW*****CONTINUE AT YOUR OWN RISK]Unlike some reviewers here, I don't find Howard Roark to be completely inhuman. He does feel pain -- not only the pain of his own struggle but of his mentor Henry Cameron and his friend Steve Mallory, the sculptor. It's just that, as Rand says, the pain "only goes down to a certain point" because it can't touch the core of his independent soul. But consider this passage when Dominique tells Roark she has married Peter Keating: "It would have been easy, if she had seen a man distorting his mouth to bite off sound, closing his fists and twisting them in defense against himself. But it was not easy, because she did not see him doing this, yet knew that this was being done, without the relief of a physical gesture." Clearly this is a man who feels and suffers.

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