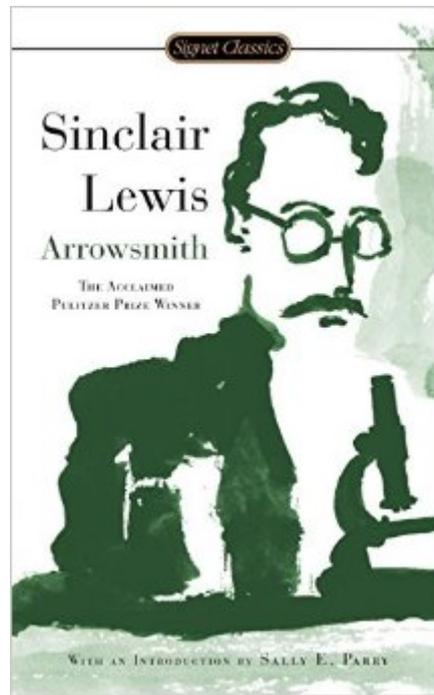


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Arrowsmith



Synopsis

With an afterword by E. L. Doctorow, the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel of one man's pursuit of intellectual freedom in the face of ignorance and corruption, from the author of *Babbalanza*, the most widely read of Sinclair Lewis's novels, is the incisive portrait of a man passionately devoted to science. As a bright, curious boy in a small Midwestern town, Martin Arrowsmith spends his free time in old Doc Vickerson's office avidly devouring medical texts. Destined to become a physician and a researcher, he discovers that societal forces of ignorance, greed, and corruption can be as life-threatening as the plague. Part satire, part morality tale, Lewis's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel illuminates the mystery and power of science while giving enduring life to a singular American hero's struggle for integrity and intellectual freedom in a small-minded world. With an Introduction by Sally E. Parry and an Afterword by E. L. Doctorow

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Sinclair Lewis is the bookend to F. Scott Fitzgerald. Both were born in Minnesota. Fitzgerald went to Princeton, Lewis to Yale. Both wrote their best books in the 1920s. Both drank, had women trouble, and turned bitter. But Fitzgerald is everyone's favorite author --- even the high school kids who are clueless about metaphors swoon over "The Great Gatsby." You need an appreciation of satire to love Lewis; nobody does, and he goes unread. It's understandable. What would you rather read --- a romantic tale about a poor boy's rise and violent death on the glittering shores of Long Island (Gatsby) or a withering take on narrow-minded life in the midwest (Main Street)? Who's more interesting --- a criminal who went to Oxford (Jay Gatsby) or a blowhard whose ambition is total

conformity to soul-deadening values (George Babbitt)? And yet. If you ask who describes America better, the more necessary writer is Sinclair Lewis. *Main Street* and *Babbitt* made his name, and most readers stop there. They shouldn't --- my wife, who once attended a one-room schoolhouse in Minnesota --- recently read "*Main Street*," and found it a very close description of life in our chic Manhattan neighborhood. *Dodsworth* --- later made into a toweringly great movie --- is as fine a love story as Fitzgerald ever dreamed up, and a lot more realistic one, at that. *It Can't Happen Here* is a powerful political drama with a subject that's not as far-fetched as you might think: how fascism comes to America. And then there's *Arrowsmith*, which has an actual hero. Set in the midwest, it doesn't lack for satire; as Lewis depicts it, happiness in a small town seems to have the shelf life of about a year.

Author Sinclair Lewis had some exposure to the medical profession early in his life through his father, who was a country doctor. Yet, even with some personal exposure, it's amazing how much of the idealism and cynicism, evident in modern physician practice, Lewis portrays in his 1926 Pulitzer Prize winning book, "*Arrowsmith*". Martin Arrowsmith, M.D. is a fictional idealist who is a human being before all else, but trying to bring science to the practice of Medicine. Actually, the story seems almost autobiographical due to the personal intensity and human frailty of the complex main character. As a registered nurse, reading *Arrowsmith* brings flashbacks of the past, like the clichés "deja vu all over again", or worse, "the more things change, the more they stay the same". Medicine for financial-profit, patient care challenges, personality conflicts, political shenanigans, professional competition, and overutilization of medical technology are some of the common problems *Arrowsmith* faces as he pursues a career in medicine after barely struggling through the politics of medical school in the mythical town of Wheatsylvania, Midwest, USA, in the early 20th century. This is not another novel about how physicians affect people's lives, but a masterpiece about the nuances of the medical profession as mysterious and suspect, of physicians who are heroes and villains. Most surprising are the humorous vignettes sprinkled throughout the plot like bits and pieces of old Jack Benny radio show skits.

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