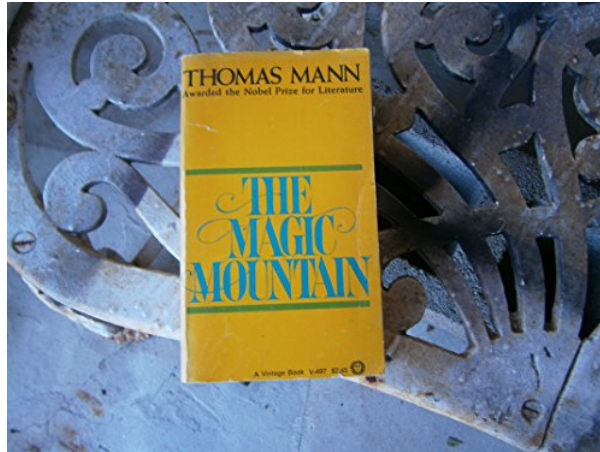
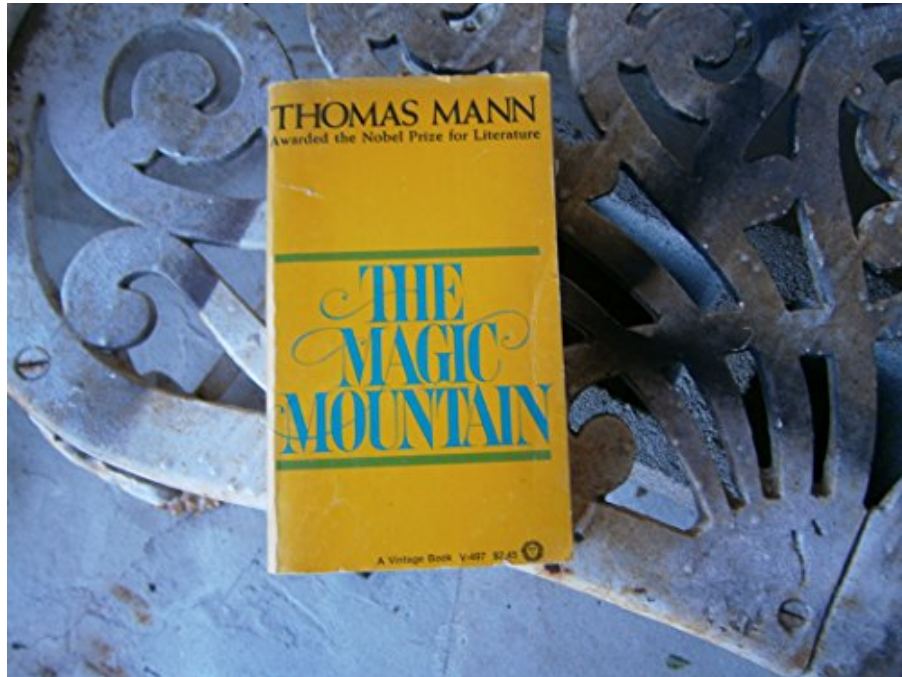


# THE MAGIC MOUNTAIN BY THOMAS MANN



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## Review

"Magnificent... a beautiful, feverish account of obsessive love" -- Jonathan Coe Guardian "Featuring lengthy debates between humanist freemasons and Jews-turned-Catholics, a long love-scene written entirely in French and a brilliant hallucinatory journey down the snowy slopes, it merits multiple readings. A novel for a lifetime not just a rainy afternoon" Guardian "A monumental writer" Sunday Telegraph "The greatest German novelist of the 20th century" Spectator "Mann is Germany's outstanding modern classic, a decadent representative of the tradition of Goethe and Schiller. With his famous irony, he was up there with Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Freud, holding together the modern world with a love of art and imagination to compensate for the emptiness left by social and religious collapse." Independent

## Language Notes

Text: English (translation)

Original Language: German

## From the Inside Flap

Set in the dreamlike world of a Swiss health sanatorium, here is a story of a young man's enlightenment through his encounters with sickness and death; an elegy to the romanticism of the European bourgeoisie in the days prior World War I.

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## Features

- Great product!

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The great novel of ideas

By Guillermo Maynez

In this absolute masterwork, Mann tells us the story and the education -intellectual, emotional and spiritual-

of young Hans Castorp. Recently graduated from his engineering studies at the university, and just about to begin working for a shipyard, Castorp travels to the Swiss Alps at Davos. He is supposed to spend there three weeks visiting his cousin Joachim Ziemssen, who is receiving treatment against tuberculosis in a high-mountain hospital. After the three original weeks, Castorp discovers he is "sick", and so he stays there seven years, the span of this magnificent "bildungsroman" or novel of apprenticeship and inner growth. It is never really clear if Castorp does get sick or if he gets trapped by the magical place.

Anyway, the isolated hospital is the perfect place for Mann to create this microcosmos of Europe and of life, a few years before that world came crumbling down forever in the suicidal WWI. In the Berghoff hospital, Castorp meets several people which will be, either through affinity or antagonism, his mentors. But first we have to mention the beautiful Russian Clawdia Chauchat, the one with the "steppenwolf-like eyes", a little older than Castorp, and with whom he falls in love -from a distance. Castorp will only have one chance of passionate love with her, before she temporarily leaves the hospital. The rest of their love will be only Platonic.

But Castorp meets other interesting and influential people. The most important one is Settembrini, an extremely sympathetic and attractive character. He is an Italian rationalist and liberal, who talks about progress, democracy, freedom, and the bright future of humankind, once it is set free from oppression and superstition. Settembrini embodies Western culture, faith in science, and progress, with a touch of naivete. Settembrini is sarcastic and straightforward, and a great creator of memorable sentences.

Halfway through the novel appears Settembrini's antagonist, his eternal (or almost) rival in heated debates. He is Naphta, a Jewish converted to Jesuit seminarist, who is a dangerous and terrorist radical. He embodies the spirit of the Middle Ages, mysticism and occultism. At the same time a religious fanatic and a Communist (after all, Communism is more a religion than a philosophy), Naphta hates all things bourgeois: family, business, democracy, science and freedom of thought. He proposes a world that is static and egalitarian, a mystic Communism ruled by the Church, and he states that the only way to reach that Utopia is through Terrorism. Settembrini's and Naphta's discussions, which have a prophetic ending, are of the utmost relevance for our time.

A third mentor appears, late in the book, in the form of the millionaire Dutchman Peeperkorn. He is an old, vane and at the same time endearing man. He comes back with Clawdia when she returns from her European sojourn, as her lover. Even though he is his beloved's lover, Castorp develops a father-son relationship with this man. Peeperkorn represents the Dionysiac impulse, the life of the flesh, the senses, and the self. Irritant and inarticulate, Peeperkorn teaches Castorp many things about life, until he makes a sad, honorable and admirable decision. I won't spoil the ending, but it makes for one of the best books ever written.

Anyone who reads this book, aside from his or her affinities, will come out of it a little or much wiser. Like in "Doktor Faustus" (which can be considered a philosophical sequel and which I have reviewed here in Amazon), Mann brilliantly explores a number of important subjects. The most important is Time, or rather, the passage of Time. What is Time? Can it be really measured? Is its length the same for all of us, all the time? What is its relationship with Space? The hospital's isolation, as I said, is perfect to explore this subject. The other major subject is sickness and health, as well as the relationship between body and mind. And, of course, Society. Mann opposes the rational and liberal mentality to the mystic and spiritual.

Never boring -in spite of its seemingly dense themes-, and with a great sense of humor and of irony, this book can be read fastly and merrily, even though it is long. Character development is of the highest order, as well as the Alpine setting and the poetic quality of Mann's prose.

PS: Look out, near the end of the sixth part (there are seven), for a chapter called "Snow". It is magical and it could be a masterfull short story in its own merit.

96 of 101 people found the following review helpful.

So Many Themes Taken Up in So Much Time

By Adam Shah

Nominally, the Magic Mountain is the story of Hans Castorp, a young German man who has just finished school and is about to start on a career in shipbuilding. First, he goes for three weeks to a Swiss sanatorium to visit his cousin, partly for a vacation before he starts his job and partly to convince his cousin, a soldier, that he should rejoin the real world rather than stay in the sanatorium. Castorp gets a check-up from the doctor, learns that he is ill and remains for seven years.

Mann originally started this book as a novella parody of sanatoriums and medicine in the early 20th Century, when doctors were first saying that disease was created by organisms and were enamored with the power of the newly discovered x-rays. However, Mann stopped the novella at the beginning of World War I, and came back to it at after the war, realizing that he had a lot to say and that this story might be a good vehicle through which to say it.

After all, the sanatorium's clientele were the new rich and the old upper class of all the different countries of Europe who began the war. The doctors acted both as the leaders who led them through the insanity and the scientists who made the mechanized, horrible war possible. And Hans Castorp was the age of the soldiers, following the leaders, the aristocracy, the scientists and the intellectuals into battle.

You can read all this into the book, if you wish. The doctors are firm in their belief that they are helping their patients, but are not above shenanigans like "proving" with little evidence that patients should stay year-round, rather than leave for the summer in order to line their wallets. Herr Settembrini and later Herr Nafta are the intellectuals filling Castorp with ideas that seem sometimes benign and sometimes diabolical. Castorp is a young, impressionable man who falls madly in love for a fellow patient, Clavdia, but has no outlet for his emotion, except during Carnival--a truly amazing scene, which alone is enough to make the book worthwhile. No wonder this continent was plunged into a tragic war that left Mann with the need to write this beautiful, tragic book.

I, however, was more interested in Mann's thoughts about of life in general that permeate this book. My favorite example is the way Mann talks about the concept of "getting used to getting used." He describes it in the sense of Castorp who never gets used to the thin air in the Alps and therefore always winds up redfaced and short of breath. However, Castorp does get used to always being redfaced and short of breath. Therefore, he gets used to getting used to the Alps.

This is what part of life is. We are unhappy with many parts of our life (maybe a job, maybe family, maybe friends or lack of friends, or financial resources) and we never get used to that. It leaves us with an empty feeling somewhere in our soul and no way to get rid of it. We never get used to this problem and thus the empty feeling never goes away. But we get used to the empty place in our soul and think of it only occasionally. But it is there crying out.

What a sad thought about life. The solution, of course, is to listen to the part that is crying out rather than squelching it and to try to do something about it. But it is often easier to get used to getting used to a situation than it is to fix the situation. It is easier for Castorp to stay in the mountains rather than breathing normally.

Overall, an excellent book, with ideas that I had never even come close to thinking of before.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Masterpiece and nice edition

By Deardon

Great novel. I can recommend these Everyman's Library hardcover editions. If you want this book as a keeper, you should be happy with this edition. The paper is good. The size is just right and the binding tight and well-done. Plus you get a ribbon as a bookmark.

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