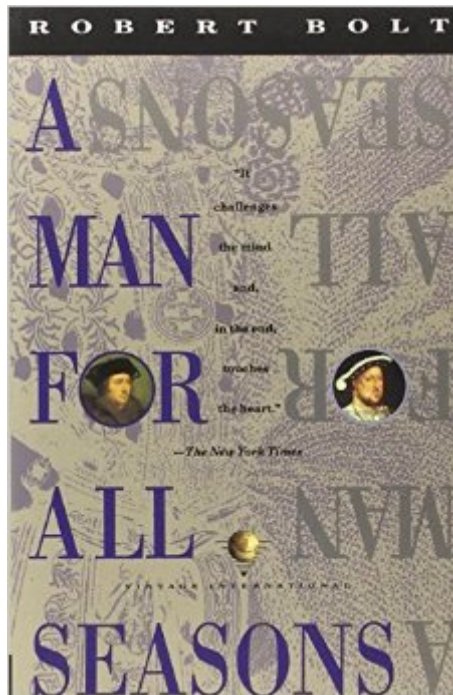


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A Man For All Seasons: A Play In Two Acts



Synopsis

The classic play about Sir Thomas More, the Lord chancellor who refused to compromise and was executed by Henry VIII.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A Man for All Seasons has long been my favorite, whether in written form, stage play, or motion picture. The story is fairly simple, another angle on the drama of Henry VIII. Sir Thomas More is a deeply religious man, much troubled by the king's break with Rome and the establishment of the Church of England, naming the king as head of the church (directly contravening the idea that Christ is ultimately head of the church, indeed, Catholics believe the church to espoused to Christ). In an attempt to keep the peace, and his neck, More resigns his office and refuses to make any statement about the issue of the break with Rome or the king's divorce what-so-ever, even to his own wife. Unfortunately, it would appear that while the king doesn't want to follow the rules, he also doesn't want a bad conscience. This requires him to get the 'blessing' of someone known to be reputable on the subject, so that his conscience may rest at ease. By circumstance of who he is, More is chosen. A document is drawn up in the Parliament, rather craftily, to which subjects of the king are required to swear. Upon refusing to swear to this document More is thrown into jail. He will neither make a statement about his thoughts on the document, nor make explanation for refusing to swear. In More's thinking, he has been forced to choose between his bodily life and his immortal soul. Eventually More is tried and convicted of High Treason, carrying the sentence of death. The

play is wonderfully crafted and does an excellent job of being subtle and emotional at the same time. It is the essence of a morality play. When push comes to shove, and egos, life, inheritances are on the line, where will you fall? Some criticize this play for not being historically accurate in some matters.

This book is the essential companion to the movie. Or do I have it backwards? So, to what lengths will a man go to keep his honor? Is everything for sale? This is the story of conscience over expediency, which is a message we need right here, right now, especially in DC. The problem with politics and principles is perennial, but it has become a bit more exacerbated with the war on terrorism. We rally behind More since he stands up for conscience. It is an interesting dilemma, since we might criticize him for not being more vocal or proactive in his stand against the king, but More does say that God made "man to serve him wittingly, in the tangle of his mind! If he suffers us to fall to such a case that there is no escaping, then we may stand our tackle as best we can. . . . But it's God's part, not our own, to bring ourselves to that extremity! Our natural business lies in escaping!" (p. 126) The best plays are the ones that make you think years after you experience them. This is Bolt's spell, and we can never escape. This is almost a perfect play. The only flaw is that More ends up with the best one liners, while the antagonists Henry VIII and Cromwell have lifeless lines without the wit and sparkle speeches that Bolt have given to More. One of the intriguing aspects of this play is all the subplots, or rather, ripples across the ocean of events. These sub-plays augment an already powerful story, and help bring more light and detail to the story. One ripple is Richard Rich. He is a young man with burning ambition. More wisely counsels him to become a teacher, instead of involving himself in affairs of court. Rich ignores the counsel, gets caught up in the sausage-machine of state, and eventually perjures himself in More's trial.

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