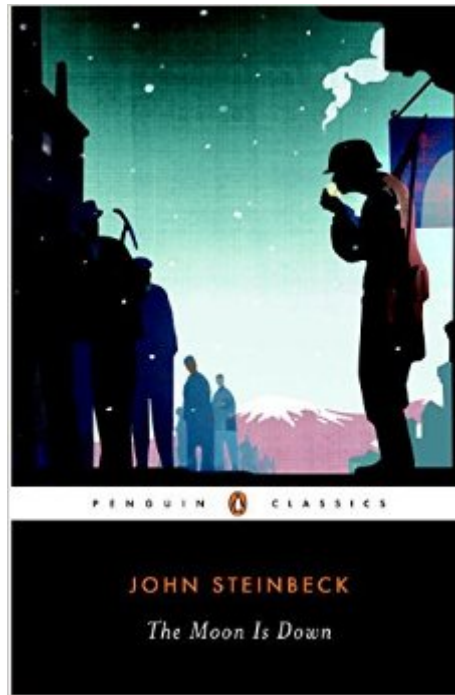


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The Moon Is Down



Synopsis

Occupied by enemy troops, a small, peaceable town comes face-to-face with evil imposed from the outside—and betrayal born within the close-knit community. In this masterful tale set in Norway during World War II, Steinbeck explores the effects of invasion on both the conquered and the conquerors. As he delves into the emotions of the German commander and the Norwegian traitor, and depicts the spirited patriotism of the Norwegian underground, Steinbeck uncovers profound, often unsettling truths about war—and about human nature. Nobel Prize winner John Steinbeck's self-described "celebration of the durability of democracy" had an extraordinary impact as Allied propaganda in Nazi-occupied Europe. Despite Axis efforts to suppress it (in Fascist Italy, mere possession of the book was punishable by death), *The Moon is Down* was secretly translated into French, Norwegian, Danish, Dutch, Swedish, German, Italian and Russian; hundreds of thousands of copies circulated throughout Europe, making it by far the most popular piece of propaganda under the occupation. Few literary works of our time have demonstrated so triumphantly the power of ideas in the face of cold steel and brute force. This edition features an introduction by Donald V. Coers. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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Customer Reviews

In an unnamed country (similar to Norway) during World War II, a German sympathizer lures local men and the town's twelve soldiers into the forest long enough for the Germans to take the town. They occupy the home of the mayor as a sign of their power and commandeer the local coal mine. Mayor Orden has never before been a brave or very forceful man, but he is not a fool, and while he tries to keep order in the town, as the Germans demand, he refuses to use the power of his office to betray the ideals of his people. Soon the locals begin to sabotage everything the Germans can use to prolong the war. The narrative is dramatic, full of conversation and containing minimal description, which gives it the feeling of a simple morality tale. Steinbeck depicts the German soldiers, at first, as almost bumbling--organized, to be sure, but basically human, showing footsoldiers getting homesick, seeking understanding of the orders they must fulfill, complaining about the weather, and wondering if their mail will arrive on time. Gradually, as Berlin exerts more and more pressure to take out the coal, the German occupiers must impose more drastic measures. Local resistance becomes more violent in response: soldiers disappear and are found dead in snowbanks, small explosions blow up rail lines, and the miners have "accidents" which prevent the coal from being removed. Even the arrest of Mayor Orden and Doctor Winter cannot force the citizens to give in to tyranny. Though the novel was published in 1942 expressly for "propaganda" in Europe's occupied countries (where it was quickly translated and disseminated secretly), it is a good story which transcends its original purpose and, as a result, it continues to find an audience.

The Moon is Down is not the most well-known of Steinbeck works, probably in part due to its unusual genesis, but it is a remarkably stirring work. Written as anti-German propaganda in 1942, it was by far the most successful work of Allied propaganda, with hundreds of thousands of copies in circulation in many different languages (despite Axis attempts to suppress it). As propaganda, the work was criticized as being too easy on the Germans -- portraying the occupying soldiers as very human and real instead of as cold and heartless. There is no doubt in my mind that this is precisely the reason for its success (and that Steinbeck is a genius in this respect). Steinbeck wrote about the plight of the occupied citizenry in a way that was so real that he reached them. It is also precisely in the occupying army's humanity that Steinbeck places the weapon that ultimately inspires the occupied and destroys the occupier: fear. One of the occupying soldiers articulates the fear very clearly: "The enemy's everywhere! Their faces look out of the doorways. The white faces behind the

curtains, listening. We have beaten them, we have won everywhere, and they wait and obey, and they wait" (p. 64). He goes on to liken the occupying army's success to that of flies who conquer flypaper. And of course the novel itself brings the fear to life -- the flypaper ultimately proves quite inhospitable to the flies. Steinbeck's work is interesting on deeper levels, too. Freedom and leadership are clearly top-of-mind for him, and he elegantly describes both. Steinbeck's Mayor is a wonderful leader and a powerful advocate for freedom as indefatigable. He tells the colonel of the occupying forces, for instance: "You and your government do not understand.

John Steinbeck fully represents a great American author. His novel, "The Moon is Down" was written as a form of propaganda for its time, and Steinbeck uncovers profound, often unsettling truths about war-and about human nature. In every chapter you read, you can find a descriptive image about the town which has been conquered, and the feelings of its people. This book reveals the evil in human nature, and the reaction of a conquered people. A small town has just been taken over and is now Nazi occupied. The troops come in, and immediately the attitude of this once peaceful town, turns into vengeance. The mayor represents the word of the people. He stays office for a in while, however under the influence and control of the Nazi's. The people of the town show no kindness, and much disrespect to the officers, which in turn makes the Nazi's angry. This leads to the death of many innocent lives. There is much loneliness and danger in the town, which results in many citizens trying to escape to England. Some successfully do, and get to the English leaders to ask for help. The English sends planes over, and drops boxes and parachutes filled with bombs and ammunition for the people of the town to use against the Nazi's. This is where the trouble begins, and certain important lives are lost. Steinbeck includes striking images and fine dialogue throughout the entire novel. Every chapter contains a descriptive image of the town adding to the drama. This, for example, found on page 51, "And over the town there hung a blackness that was deeper than the cloud, and over the town there hung a sullenness and a dry, growing hatred." Even when a line is not in context, we can understand the story by Steinbeck's creative and vivid scenes.

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