



Hermann Hesse: A Biography (Author of Siddhartha and Steppenwolf)

Coral Saloman (Herman Hesse Biographer)

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ABOUT THE BOOK

Since the publication of Peter Camenzind in 1904 Hermann Hesse has been loved and hated by his own people, ignored and worshipped by the English speaking world, accused of being a Nazi sympathizer, and blacklisted by almost every newspaper in Hitler's Germany.

He accomplished all of this simply by writing some of the most honest and introspective fiction in modern literature, and by allowing the entire literate world to act as spectator to his own tumultuous internal journey. From Siddhartha to Steppenwolf, his characters faced the most complex questions of life, coming from different places and times, different backgrounds and ambitions, but all of them represented Hesse, and all of them wrestled with questions of self and soul that haunted their author throughout his life.

Hesse was a prolific author, publishing seventeen novels as well as several poems and essays, and, though mostly fiction, his works tended to follow the path of his own life, and his protagonists wrestle with the same problems he faced. He was constantly battling with the conflict of the mind and the body, the spiritual world and the sensual one.

During his life he struggled with questions of nationalism and pacifism, living through two world wars that nearly destroyed his native country. He desperately craved social acceptance, but found himself to be awkward, a natural loner, and wondered if the role of the artist was inevitably to be an outsider; an observer, but not a participant in life.

These questions and more are mirrored in his fiction, as he uses his characters to live out the different paths available to him, and the readers are reminded of similar dualities in their own lives. His novels tend to feature pairs of characters, one representing the ideal he wishes he could achieve, and one the less romantic reality he knows he must accept.

MEET THE AUTHOR

Coral Saloman is an experienced writer and a member of the Hyperink Team, which works hard to bring you high-quality, engaging, fun content. Happy reading!

EXCERPT FROM THE BOOK

Though his books were set in a wide range of places and times, and though their characters differed drastically in many ways, some themes reappear throughout his works, and these repeating patterns give the reader a great deal of insight into the mind of Hermann Hesse. One of his earliest novels, *Demian*, focused on the Nietzschean concept of the Apollonian versus the Dionysian spirit. This is a conflict between the passionate and the structured drives that occur within all people, and it is a conflict with which Hesse wrestled his entire life.

Another important idea within Demian is the concept of right and wrong. Hesse once wrote in a letter to his parents that "the morality of artists is replaced by aesthetics," and in the novel Sinclair expresses an appreciation for music because it is amoral, or outside of good and evil. According to Nietzsche, morality is a construct that arises solely from society and only by shaking off the chains of that construct and exerting their will can anyone truly be who they are.

This idea of finding oneself, of searching for the deepest, most honest parts of one's own nature is another concept that Hesse struggled with, and another that appears in all of his books. Hesse came from a family that saw the innate nature of mankind as savage and somehow unclean, and who believed that religion was the means required to control that nature. The author himself, however, felt a deep connection to the natural world, and failed to see the intrinsic evil in his natural desires. In Narcissus and Goldmund...

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