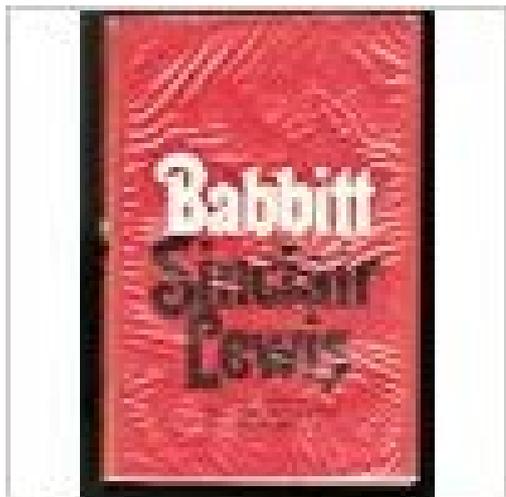


Babbitt by Sinclair Lewis



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Book by SINCLAIR LEWIS



Reviews of the **Babbitt** by Sinclair Lewis

Anayaron

In 1922 the ultimate middleman, George F. Babbitt from Floral Heights, Cincinnati, took the stage and showed a character who was crass, pushy, materialistic, conformist yet occasionally sympathetic. Caustic but funny satirical novel never gets old, possibly because American class distinctions haven't changed all that much over the years. This is the starting place for Sinclair Lewis's most important novels, not MAIN STREET which showed Americans the way things had been, but BABBITT that showed Americans the way things were (and Europeans the way things they'd always suspected). Highly recommended.

anonymous

I enjoyed Babbitt much more than I thought I would. It's not easy at the start, as the reader gets thrown into a rah rah early 20th century American business environment in the fictional city of Zenith. There isn't a whole lot of plot; it's more a novel of characters, including, of course, George

Babbitt. He initially appears to be a pumped-up, full of himself aspirant to the 1%. For a large portion of the book he says all the right things at various local community clubs and political events about squashing unions and rewarding the go-getters needed to get the country back on its feet after the first world war. He gets a reputation as an orator, and his real estate business prospers. But even as he becomes a leader in Zenith's "boosterism", underneath it all he yearns to slip away with the fairy child of his dreams:

"He was somewhere among unknown people who laughed at him. He slipped away, ran down the paths of a midnight garden, and at the gate the fairy child was waiting. Her dear and tranquil hand caressed his cheek. He was gallant and wise and well-beloved; warm ivory were her arms; and beyond the perilous moors the brave sea glittered."

After a friend's life takes a disastrous turn, Babbitt rebels and for a time searches for the fairy child among women of his acquaintance. He is reminded of his more liberal views when young, and begins to see his own rebellious son differently.

The book was a huge success in its time, and in 1930 Lewis won the Nobel Prize, the first American to do so. He writes really well, and more than once I thought this was what Updike was trying to do, with less success. Babbitt is a satire of crass American commercialism and superficial optimism, but the book also has a heart. "Babbitt" became a word in our lexicon defined as ""a person and especially a business or professional man who conforms unthinkingly to prevailing middle-class standards". To me, that definition is unfair, as Georgie Babbitt wasn't an unthinking conformist. He yearned for escape with the fairy child, but determinedly, with "pep", he tried to make the best of the hand he saw himself dealt. A four star read. (

Ynap

No, this is not in the fast-paced style of Elmer Gantry. Instead it is the slow, plodding and revealing style that is reflective of most of Lewis's other works. Mr. Babbitt is the ultimate person of conformity. He has patterned his life after the 'Great American Dream' and, by doing so, finds himself as the ultimate Conservative, a staunch pillar of his community, a constant achiever and a people-pleaser at all costs. While attempting to live out this mundane, yet respected, life style Babbitt, like the restless human soul we all are, begins to challenge this lifestyle by living in the opposing manner of local mores in order to appease his unhappiness. While his needs and wants are more mindfully met in this arena he becomes highly disturbed that his public personae is becoming damaged by his supposed recklessness. After realizing that he cannot take the pleasures from both worlds at the same time he retreats back into the sanguine person he was. Destined to be unhappy by this move he, art novel's end, encourages his youngest son to go against the social mores that he tried to defeat and ultimately failed at.....

Steelcaster

A classic, and deservedly so. Alternately funny and sad, a contemporaneous view of our society that although no longer the same, illustrates that human nature hasn't changed even though societal norms have evolved. Except for the ending, which I found to be a let-down (no spoiler follows), the book still warrants a read.

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