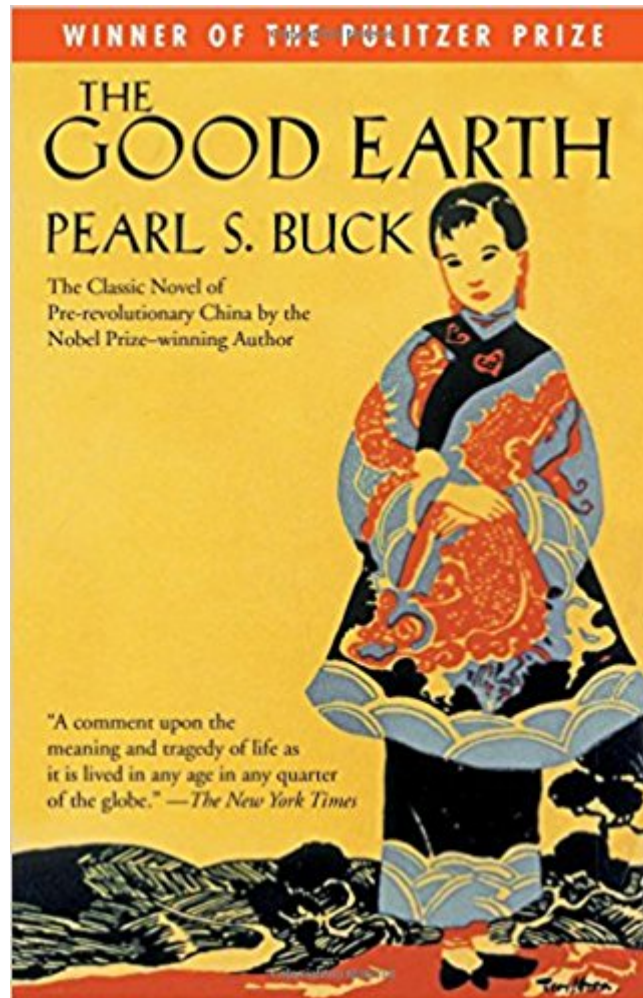




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# The Good Earth (Oprah's Book Club)



## Synopsis

Nobel Laureate Pearl S. Buck's epic Pulitzer Prize-winning novel and Oprah Book Club selection about a vanished China and one family's shifting fortunes. Though more than seventy years have passed since this remarkable novel won the Pulitzer Prize, it has retained its popularity and become one of the great modern classics. In *The Good Earth* Pearl S. Buck paints an indelible portrait of China in the 1920s, when the last emperor reigned and the vast political and social upheavals of the twentieth century were but distant rumblings. This moving, classic story of the honest farmer Wang Lung and his selfless wife O-Lan is must reading for those who would fully appreciate the sweeping changes that have occurred in the lives of the Chinese people during the last century. Nobel Prize winner Pearl S. Buck traces the whole cycle of life: its terrors, its passions, its ambitions and rewards. Her brilliant novel is beloved by millions of readers is a universal tale of an ordinary family caught in the tide of history.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Pittsburgh Post Gazette" One of the most important and revealing novels of our time."The New York Times" A comment upon the meaning and tragedy of life as it is lived in any age in any quarter of the globe."Boston Transcript" One need never have lived in China or know anything about the Chinese to understand it or respond to its appeal.

Pearl S. Buck was born on June 26, 1892, in Hillsboro, West Virginia. Pearl began to publish stories

and essays in the 1920s, in magazines such as The Nation, The Chinese Recorder, Asia, and The Atlantic Monthly. Her first novel, East Wind, West Wind, was published by the John Day Company in 1930. In 1931, John Day published Pearl S. Buck's second novel, The Good Earth. This became the bestselling book of both 1931 and 1932, won the Pulitzer Prize and the Howells Medal in 1935, and would be adapted as a major MGM film in 1937. In 1938, less than a decade after her first book had appeared, Pearl won the Nobel Prize in literature, the first American woman to do so. By the time of her death in 1973, Pearl had published more than seventy books: novels, collections of stories, biography and autobiography, poetry, drama, children's literature, and translations from the Chinese. She is buried at Green Hills Farm in Bucks County, Pennsylvania.

No wonder this book is a classic. We read it for our Book Club this past Monday. Everybody was very impressed in how the impact of the famine and Wang Lung's attachment and love for his land resonates in every culture and country. We felt sorry for O Lan who devoted her life to her husband and his dream of keeping his piece of land and later helping him acquire more land. She bore stoically three boys and two "slaves" (girls) without ever complaining

Excellent author. I have read this book many times. She is a classic. Required reading in high school. My son, who attended the same high school, read it too. We both enjoy Pearl S. Buck. I have read all of her books. This story takes you through several generations and gives you an angle of Chinese living that has not been presented before. This is from a farmers point of view. His prosperity is forwarded by his new wife. She is a diligent worker and money saver. Women's rights should promote this story for women's equality.

The Good Earth is my all time favorite book. I also read the other two books in the trilogy with Sons coming in a very close second. I also watched the MGM adaptation which was mostly faithful to the book enough not to detract or irritate the viewer. So naturally, when I discovered the graphic novel, I had to snatch it right up. I admit, I've never been much of a comic book reader or ever really gotten into graphic novels, but I understood that the graphic novel would be condensed, allowing the pictures to fill in for descriptive passages in the book. But I still felt like this was excessively widdled down from the original so that it felt more like a shadow of the original book. Dumbed down and shaved off to where it was patronizing to the reader. There was one particular edit that really annoyed me. In the book, while Wang Lung was in the southern city scaping a meager living before the oncoming army threw a wrench into everything, Wang Lung, in desperation considers selling his

daughter to the rich house to flee and return home. He asks O'lan if she were beaten. Which O'lan replies, "Every day I was beaten." So he tries another tactic, thinking his daughter may grow up to be pretty and have a kinder fate, and asks, "Were the pretty slaves beaten?" O'lan replies, "Aye, beaten or carried to a man's bed as was the whim." In the graphic novel, the second question was left off entirely but not O'lan's reply to it. So she ended up answering his first question with the second answer only. And the reason why this is a problem is it strongly implies O'lan had been raped as a slave, where the book made it fairly obvious that she was never regarded by anyone in the house except to be ordered about. This edit basically creates a giant plot device where none before it existed. My next complaint was in the art style itself. I was excited over the prospect of having imagery to accompany the books. If Pearl S. Buck has a flaw as a writer, she's not particularly good at describing things in any clear way. So I was unfortunately disappointed that the artwork seemed to be just as lacking in color and detail as her descriptions. Plain blue background panels and crude renderings that didn't look remotely human. Even characters that were supposed to be beautiful in the novel looked strange or grotesque. Even Lotus who stole Wang Lung's heart midway through the novel didn't look human... she barely even had features. She looked like some child's doll made of canvas and straw. But I won't say I was completely unimpressed. At times, he did convey through pictures what was in the narrative so that words needn't be used. But after the huge trim of interesting and very important scenes and details, it felt more like a children's book. I suppose that might be the intent, but you're paying the price of an adult novel. So bear that in mind. Would I recommend this? You might enjoy it if manga and graphic novels are your bag, and you never read the book. But if you're a fan of the novel, you may find it to be a weak version.

Didn't really like this book when I was forced to study it as a literature text in school. Re-reading it as an adult, I can appreciate it a lot more. May seem strange that I like the book at this time in my life that I have re-discovered a love for gardening and planting vegetables organically. Everything comes from and leads back to the earth. It is such a challenge to get vegetable seeds to sprout. I cannot imagine what a huge challenge farmers in the old days faced. The environment, the fact that the land doesn't even belong to you and you have to work it. It is pure hard work. There is such a close relationship between man and land that we have forgotten in our everyday lives. The only thing I take issue is, the book sets up the wrong expectations of what a "good woman is". How can O Lan be an accurate portrayal of what the women of those times were like? She is like a superwoman to a ridiculous extent. Giving birth and going back to till the land, plus cooking dinner, all in the same afternoon?!! The plot is also somewhat depressing. In the end, wealth cannot buy happiness. And a

woman can be perfect, but if she has big feet and is not good at conversation, somehow, men still go for the coquettish types who can sweet-talk?

I am a well-read male, sixty-five years old. I have read perhaps a thousand books in my lifetime; some fiction, some non-fiction. I recall setting down *The Good Earth* as a teenager after turning the last page and thinking, “This is the greatest book I have ever read.” I purchased *The Good Earth* on Kindle recently because it was \$3.00 and I recalled it having an effect on me. It moved me as it did fifty years before. It is simply, and yet powerfully written, stirring the same emotions in me as it did before. As I re-read it, I kept reminding myself “This is just fiction about Chinese peasants.” But it is far more than that. Much as Shakespeare transcends the sixteenth century to tell stories about people, so Pearl S. Buck transcends the foreign mores and privation of turn-of-the-twentieth century China in telling her spellbinding story. This may still be the best book I have ever read. *The Good Earth* was then, and remains now, a classic of English literature.

This is a reread, or re-reread for me. It is set in rural China before the revolution, and follows the life of a farmer and his family. It’s a wonderful character study that has universal appeal.

I found it strange that a lady writer could so completely capture the stages of a man’s life. This should be mandatory reading for every high school student, especially the males! Interesting plot, with plenty of poignant moments to ponder. I highly recommend it!

Well written story about a poor farmer in the late 1800s/early 1900s in rural China. The moral of the novel can be applied to all cultures. The author’s writing style is very convincing; it was difficult to stop once the reader opened the first page. I highly recommend this book.

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