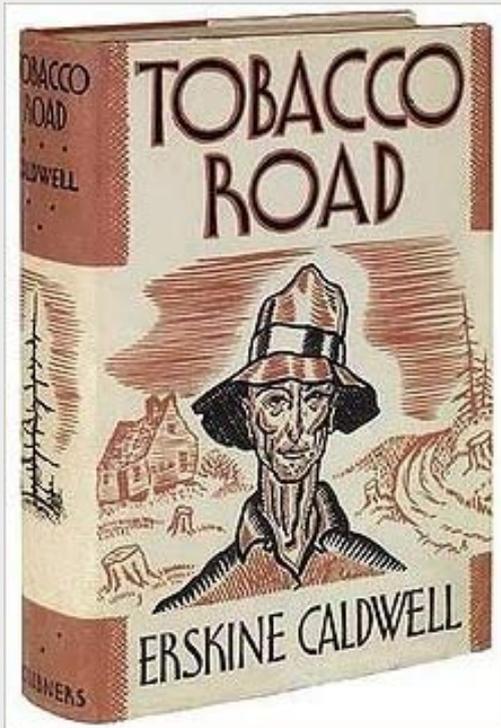


Tobacco Road by Erskine Caldwell



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Author: Erskine Caldwell

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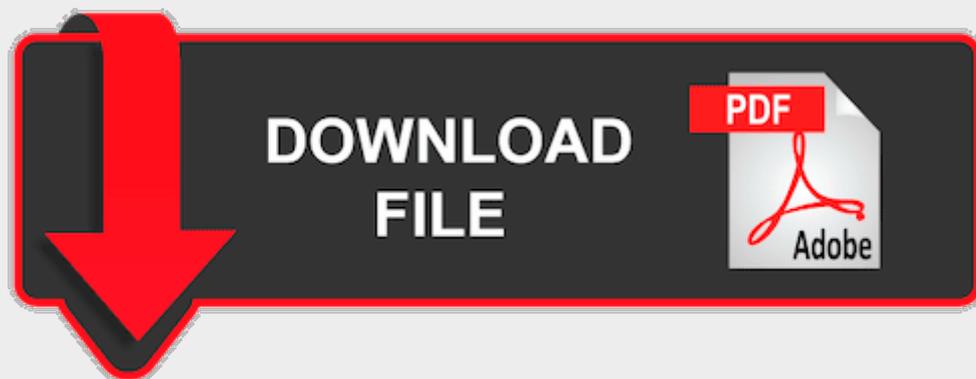
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Jeeter Lester, a poor Georgia sharecropper, and his family struggle to get by, but when his son Dude is seduced and married by Jeeter's widowed sister, it starts a tragic chain of events.



Reviews of the Tobacco Road by Erskine Caldwell

1. GAMER

Story of a fictitious Northern Georgian family. Describes how some members of the family have moved on and bettered their lives by getting away from their familial home; and how, those who remained, "intend" to improve their lot, yet make no real effort to do so. They, further, blame

their circumstances on external factors (the rich and the bankers) rather on impotence in not actually making an effort to change their behavior.

"Tobacco Road" contains depiction of sexual content much the same as "God's Little Acre" which drew heavy criticism when it was released. It was, in fact, censored in Georgia where the action occurred. Within the context of the moral standards of today, hardly anyone would think twice about those passages in this book dealing with sexual attitudes and activities. It is quite tame compared with the available afternoon "soap operas" prime-time television drama.

Overall, "Tobacco Road" was a pleasant read dealing with the attitudes of a poor southern family in the depression era of the 1930s.

2. unmasked

There's a lot of controversy about this book. Is it a pulp novel, black comedy, tragedy, trage-comedy, does it "bash The South"? I can only say it's largely a little bit of all of the above. For sure it is a bare bones, no holds barred depiction of a moment in time. Characters that may not have been real per se but be assured there WERE real people quite like them. It not so much addresses as depicts the issues of poverty, ignorance, sloth yes but more so the phenomenon of being placed in the situation of having expectations, however low, placed upon you & then sinking to them; all the while feeling yourself a victim of the system that places those expectations. Violence, substance abuse, hunger, sexual abuse and promiscuity, desensitization are all depicted as the scourge of the rural South at the time. Oddly these things are lamented as the scourge of urban America now. So we've learned little other than how to transplant our problems' locale. It may be unflattering and downright disturbing but never the less an excellent read.

3. Mr.Savik

I had read this some sixty years ago while in high school. It was an

"underground" copy because Caldwell was not thought appropriate for the feeble teenage mind. I have just finished re-reading it now and while it has somewhat harsh scenes in it, I think the teenage mind is up to the task.

It starts as a tragedy and becomes more tragic. A very loosely-structured family is in a situation that is not tenable. This, along with their lack of personal abilities, makes the entire situation impossible. Then, we read how they each destroy themselves in one way or another.

As a teenager, I had traveled through this area and Caldwell does a fine job of capturing the culture of the times. He is obviously writing from personal knowledge. I guess you could read a political statement in this but I chose not to do so.

4. Dark_Sun

Erskine Caldwell was a prolific Southern writer of twenty-five novels, twelve books of non-fiction, and about 150 short stories. He was determined to depict the life of the poor, both white and black, in the Deep South and was deeply sympathetic to their plight. He was often derided for being a corrupter of morals, a racist, and a traitor to Southern culture. Caldwell was not deterred and was always faithful to his efforts to realistically portray the issues of class and race.

"Tobacco Road" (1932) is one of his earlier works and, along with "God's Little Acre" (1933), was immensely popular, selling tens of million copies and being translated into 43 languages. It's not an esoteric exercise of deep societal thought. It is, rather, a crude look at grinding poverty and ignorance written in the vernacular of people without education who are illiterate and superstitious while suffering from extreme poverty that creates crippling hunger and weakness of will. In the throes of such privation a better life can only be wished for and is the carrot on a stick that is opaquely viewed and never reached. All conversation within these families is an endless repetition of complaints of hunger pangs, hopeless dreams, and flights of imaginative sexual adventures.

Most of the story occurs on or near the ramshackle Lester farm edged by a dusty tobacco road that was created by dragging large barrels of tobacco leaf to market. An endless parade of characters pass by; negroes who delight in mocking someone in a worse situation, poor whites looking for something they can wheedle or steal, and religious zealots looking for

converts with subsidy funding all have a part in Caldwell's story. The story can be summarized as turnip theft, marital discord, seduction of a young boy, purchase of a new car, and carelessness, all under a dark veil of constant hunger. The entire Lester clan is the focus of Caldwell's insightful study of destitution, colloquial dialogue, and irrational behavior. This is a family of ignorance, timidity, brazenness, and ignorant impulses with Caldwell chronicling the diverse behaviors with honesty and dark humor.

I have enjoyed this book several times. I have never failed to marvel at Caldwell's insight as he unfurls a way of life most of us have not experienced nor imagined. His writing is impeccable. One of America's most famous writers included Erskine Caldwell in the top five best American writers along with Faulkner, Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and Dos Passos. The famous writer? William Faulkner, who immodestly included himself. Personally I sometimes enjoy Caldwell at least as much as the other four Faulkner selections.

Schuyler T Wallace
Author of TIN LIZARD TALES

5. Faell

This review is not about the content of this book - it concerns the size of the font. Be advised that the font is very small. Unless you have great vision the book will be difficult to read. I loved this book in my youth and would like to read it again. I am trying to remain loyal to the printed page but some of today's reprints reduce the font dramatically to save printing cost.

Something else about this book. There are multiple misspelled words on each page. It really distracts from the book. These are not intentional misspellings by the author for effect - they are printing errors. There are additional spacing and syntax errors on each page.

Find another printing if you want to read and enjoy this book. I wish I had.

6. Welahza

Strange powerful tour through the bottom of human decency and humanity staged at the bottom of the great depression.in the very poorest part of the country. poor in education, consideration and financial outlook and expectations.

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