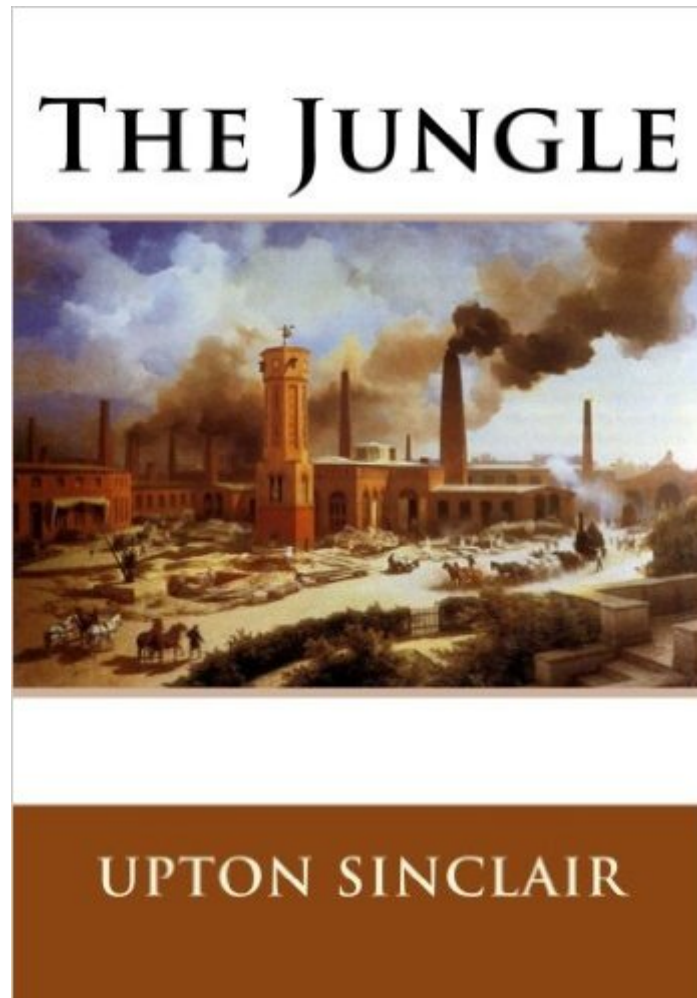


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The Jungle



Synopsis

The Jungle is a 1906 novel written by the American journalist and novelist Upton Sinclair (1878–1968). Sinclair wrote the novel to portray the lives of immigrants in the United States in Chicago and similar industrialized cities. Many readers were most concerned with his exposure of health violations and unsanitary practices in the American meatpacking industry during the early 20th century, based on an investigation he did for a socialist newspaper. The book depicts working class poverty, the lack of social supports, harsh and unpleasant living and working conditions, and a hopelessness among many workers. These elements are contrasted with the deeply rooted corruption of people in power. A review by the writer Jack London called it, "the Uncle Tom's Cabin of wage slavery." Sinclair was considered a muckraker, or journalist who exposed corruption in government and business. He first published the novel in serial form in 1905 in the Socialist newspaper, Appeal to Reason, between February 25, 1905, and November 4, 1905. In 1904, Sinclair had spent seven weeks gathering information while working incognito in the meatpacking plants of the Chicago stockyards for the newspaper. It was published as a book on February 26, 1906 by Doubleday and in a subscribers' edition.

Book Information

Paperback: 250 pages

Publisher: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform (November 29, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1503331865

ISBN-13: 978-1503331860

Product Dimensions: 6.7 x 0.6 x 9.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars Â Â See all reviews Â (482 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #13,542 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #161 in Â Books > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > Political #579 in Â Books > Literature & Fiction > Classics

Customer Reviews

Half starved immigrants from Lithuania newly arrived in America were told that the land of milk and honey was Chicago. "There is one kind of prison where the man is behind bars, and everything he desires is outside. And there is another kind where the things are behind bars, and the man is outside." Ona and Jurgis saw Chicago as a vision of power, a dream of wonder, human energy where employment gave freedom for life, love and joy. This is a horrendous study of the early animal

slaughter and meat packaging industry. "The slaughtering machine ran on. It was like some horrible crime committed in a dungeon, all unseen and unheeded, buried out of sight and of memory." Jurgis Ruckus labored in Brown's Killing Fields and Durham's fertilizer mill. Then with his wife's death, he is blacklisted. Without work, without sustenance, after weeks of trials and tribulations, he becomes a tramp, then a harvester filling the seasonal crops. Being homeless, he wanders over the continent. They all worked in dangerous, unhealthful, squalid places. They wrestled with hunger and privation, always falling victim to brutal firemen, cheating employers, horrific accidents, disease and death. Injustice and oppression pressed cruelly. The city, even the country was a wilderness quagmire without a visible haven. Organized and predatory greed ruled above the poverty, sickness, threats, hatred, prejudice, fraud and falsehoods. The oppressed knew and had no comforter. They were disheartened, disinherited and finally disconnected from life without respite or any hope of deliverance from these prisons created by those who controlled power through money. All were caught beneath the juggernaut wheels of greed. A truly classical work.

Almost depressing to read it - but it also puts things in perspective. Even in our worst economic times it has never been as bad as it was for newly arrived immigrants in Chicago during that time period.

An excellent novel of life in the Chicago Stock Yards in all its agony. A must read for all regardless of your politics.

This book was an easy read. I usually read non-fiction but 2 or 3 times a year I try and read a classic novel. Sinclair's gritty depiction of life in the stockyard area of Chicago for a working class immigrant family is superb. I found that he did not over romanticize the characters. He exposed the flaws and failings of Jurgis, while at the same time illustrating the overall system that contributed to his struggles. It made me think. If I had been alive in 1900 and firmly part of what would have been the middle class then, i.e. father was a government worker, shop owner etc - what would I have thought about the people working in the meat packing halls. Would I have even been aware of them? Would I have just preached pick yourself up by your bootstraps? Would I have thought you have it better here than in your former countries? Hard questions, but like the title of the review says, great books should make you think. In the end I am thankful for the changes of the progressive era although I would never think that Sinclair's socialism solution would be the right one for us. I am glad we live in the times we do - with our economic system guided by voluntary exchanges, not

centrally planned , with a strong social safety net guided by Judeo - Christian influences. Although we have work to do (and I see the problem with our economy more of the top 20% pulling away than a 1% problem), I think our system is the one most likely to accomodate human nature as I understand it.

This is one of the masterpieces of American literature. Although written over 100 years ago it is sadly as relevant today as it was then. The exploitation of the poor, especially the recent immigrant, continues today. I first read this over 50 years ago in High School. Now, as then, the workers remain like a herd of beasts. Easy prey for the corporate, capitalist animal, and his hired thugs, politicians, judges, cops and soldiers, when if unionized, United, militant, and prepared for direct action, they could crush the oppressor. But no. To do that would be radical, Socialist even! So they suffer. What really is painful reading this book 110 years later is that our meat is still being poisoned, not by filth, but by hormones, antibiotics and other carcinogens, and that the oppressed of that era (European immigrants) have become established and are now the oppressors of the new immigrants from Latin America, the Middle East, South Asia etc. As Solomon wrote "There is nothing new under the sun".

The foods we eat plus the way people are treated for the benefit of greed and wealth are a travesty to mankind.

I can't believe I didn't read this in high school. As a Chicagoan with Lithuanian heritage, I found the novel personally compelling. But beyond those connections, *The Jungle* is a must-read for those aiming to understand American history.

Amazing writing. I'm not sure why this wasn't required reading when I was in school, or why I never was into reading classic novels in my younger years, but I'm glad I finally got around to reading "The Jungle." I can see why the book created such a stir. This novel, written at the end of the gilded-age, shows the great divide created by unregulated capitalism, showing how workers and consumers can end up bearing the heavy burden, the real cost, of maintaining the lifestyles of the rich and powerful, how the American dream of working hard to succeed does not work when the cards are stacked against you. Funny how some of these same problems are with us again. How easy it is to assume the free market can regulate itself, after generations of living in a regulated market. People seem to forget the first principle of business is to make a profit. The ending was a weak point by today's standards. There was hope that socialism would address all the flaws of social inequity.

Obviously, that never happened, though political changes were enacted to address some of the inequities. Socialism was a dream never realized and I'm not sure I'd want the author's final solution. It reminded me of Ayn Rand, escaping from Communism and seeing Capitalism as the ultimate system of perfection. The grass is always greener . . . The theories of government never translate into practice with the lofty ideals or ethics of the philosophers who write about a perfect society. I doubt there is any system (including capitalism) that would be successful if not tempered to address the ways humans devise to scam the system. What I found most interesting is the nation's current drift into a second gilded-age. It makes this a frightening powerful novel, a modern-day warning. I wish it was required reading.

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