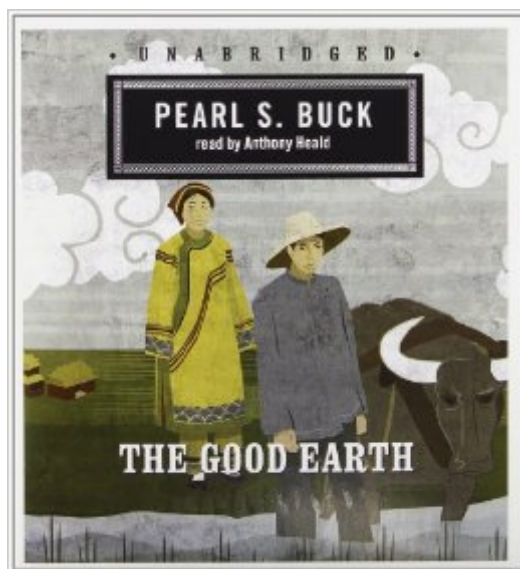


The book was found

The Good Earth (Blackstone Audio Classic Collection)



Synopsis

[Read by Anthony Heald] This Pulitzer Prize-winning classic tells the poignant tale of a Chinese farmer and his family in old agrarian China. The humble Wang Lung glories in the soil he works, nurturing the land as it nurtures him and his family. Nearby, the nobles of the House of Hwang consider themselves above the land and its workers, but they will soon meet their own downfall. Hard times come upon Wang Lung and his family when flood and drought force them to seek work in the city. The working people riot, breaking into the homes of the rich and forcing them to flee. When Wang Lung shows mercy to one noble and is rewarded, he begins to rise in the world, even as the House of Hwang falls.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (1,137 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

This 1932 Pulitzer Prize winning novel is still a standout today. Deceptive in its simplicity, it is a story built around a flawed human being and a teetering socio-economic system, as well as one that is layered with profound themes. The cadence of the author's writing is also of note, as it rhythmically lends itself to the telling of the story, giving it a very distinct voice. No doubt the author's writing style was influenced by her own immersion in Chinese culture, as she grew up and lived in China, the daughter of missionaries. This is the story of the cyclical nature of life, of the passions and desires that motivate a human being, of good and evil, and of the desire to survive and thrive against great odds. It begins with the story of an illiterate, poor, peasant farmer, Wang Lung, who ventures from the rural countryside and goes to town to the great house of Hwang to obtain a bride from those among the rank of slave. There, he is given the slave O-lan as his bride. Selfless, hardworking, and

a bearer of sons, the plain-faced O-lan supports Wang Lung's veneration of the land and his desire to acquire more land. She stays with him through thick and thin, through famine and very lean times, working alongside him on the land, making great sacrifices, and raising his children. As a family, they weather the tumultuousness of pre-revolutionary China in the 1920s, only to find themselves the recipient of riches beyond their dreams. At the first opportunity, they buy land from the great house of Hwang, whose expenses appear to be exceeding their income. With the passing of time, Wang Lung buys more and more land from the house of Hwang, until he owns it all, as his veneration of the land is always paramount.

While reading this book, I was totally struck by the honest and compassionate way Pearl Buck told her story. Born and raised in China, I can see my great grandparents in Wang Lung and his wife O-Lan, although in the end they didn't make it to the riches but stayed in the middle class among farmers and had put all their kids through schools which was the first ever in their village. What I love most about this book is that it shows the Westerners what life was REALLY like in rural China at the turn of the century instead of the usual stereotype or common cliché. In that sense, Pearl Buck was more Chinese than Chinese, for Amy Tan, Dai SiJie and the alike are just commercial writers in my opinion, who more or less only wrote what they thought would sell. The book itself is certainly well written too. It's as if walking through a living museum of the past and one could vividly envision what Wang Lung and O-Lan had gone through as the story unfolds. Pearl Buck used simple yet powerful narrative language in which I felt Wang Lung's pain, suffering, ambition, agony, pride and all sorts of emotions and couldn't help but empathized with him as a human being. There are also small things that delighted me in Pearl Buck's writing. To name just one, she had faithfully translated the characters' dialogs into English and I have to say you can't get more authentic than that. For example, she used moon for month, old head for old man, etc., and those are exactly how we say in Chinese, literally. It's a pity that neither in the US nor in China Pearl Buck is recognized or respected as much as she should have been. Though I went to Nanjing University where Pearl Buck had taught for years in China, little have I heard of her until just now, after finishing the Good Earth.

When great political upheaval occurs, do the "ordinary people" even know about it? How does it affect their lives? Is social change something palpable, or only something one can see in retrospect? These questions are addressed in Pearl Buck's moving and exquisitely written Pulitzer-Prize-winning novel, "The Good Earth." It is the story of a simple Chinese peasant, Wang Lung. We first meet him as a young man on his way to pick up his bride, whom he has purchased

from the estate of a wealthy landowner. Wang Lung is a farmer, barely able to survive, but it is time for him to marry and produce a grandchild for his aged father, who lives in his simple farm hut and is shown great reverence, as was the way in China at the time. The only way that Wang Lung could afford a wife at all, and a virgin, which was highly desired, was to purchase an ugly female slave from the great house. All of the pretty slave women were defiled by the master and his sons early on; O-lan was so ugly that she was spared. Harsh? Evil? Yes. But the story is told with such simplicity, from the viewpoint of Wang Lung, who knows no other life. Which is one of Buck's points: the simple Chinese peasant, struggling to survive, had no wherewithal to stand back and say, "I should not be buying an undefiled slave from a corrupt landowner who keeps me in virtual slavery as well." It just didn't happen that way. O-Lan turns out to be the perfect farmer's wife, hardworking, efficient, and, it turns out, wonderfully fertile. The scene where the young woman painfully gives birth in the field during harvest time and then goes back to work without missing a beat is almost a cliché by now.

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