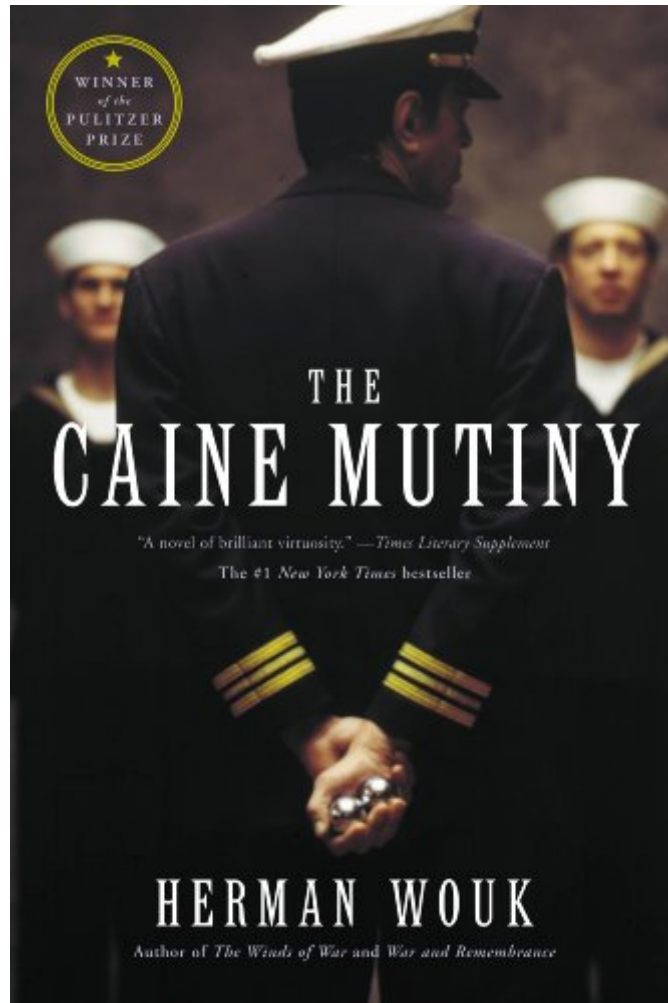


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The Caine Mutiny: A Novel Of World War II



Synopsis

The Novel that Inspired the Now-Classic Film The Caine Mutiny and the Hit Broadway Play The Caine Mutiny Court-Martial Herman Wouk's boldly dramatic, brilliantly entertaining novel of life-and-mutiny-on a Navy warship in the Pacific theater was immediately embraced, upon its original publication in 1951, as one of the first serious works of American fiction to grapple with the moral complexities and the human consequences of World War II. In the intervening half century, The Caine Mutiny has become a perennial favorite of readers young and old, has sold millions of copies throughout the world, and has achieved the status of a modern classic.

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Customer Reviews

Please read this book. I was assigned it in high school English, and thought, "Oh great, another war book." I took it home, began my first 4 chapter assignment, and realized 3 hours later that I was halfway through it. I finished it the next day. That was ten years ago, and I have been rereading it at least twice a year ever since. I read it to my husband on a cross-country journey and the miles went by like nothing. It never fails to involve me, and I never fail to be moved by the ending. A few reviewers have said that the book is hard to understand, or that there is too much military jargon, but there really isn't; there was nothing in there that a seventeen-year-old girl couldn't understand

(at least, a seventeen-year-old who knows how to spell "squat".) This book is powerful, funny, insightful, and moving. Don't pass it up.

I first opened this book late one summer evening at the age of twenty-two. Even then, I knew after the first few pages that I was beginning to read a classic. And there is nothing more enjoyable than knowing you are going to be entertained for hours on end by a great story. It's about a care-free Willis Seward Keith, who enters World War II and the navy as a rich, immature boy, and develops his manhood and maturity through the backdrop of war, and the sufferance of an emotionally disturbed captain. The boy that goes to war is not the responsible man who comes home. He has the confidence of a man who has learned to lead men, and developed self assurance through his accomplishments rather than his wealth. It is probably how each of us wish that we would develop to the challenges of manhood that define us. As the book says, Ensign Keith is not the center of the mutiny, but he is to the mutiny the same as the single jewel bearing that opens or closes a vault door. Herman Wouk is a story-teller of classic stature. His work will always be counted amongst the finest literary achievements. This is one of the two most memorable books I have ever read. It has been 33 years since I read "The Caine Mutiny." I bought another after the pages of my original could no longer be kept between the covers. That's the best recommendation I can make.

Why is this book so great? Why did it win a Pulitzer Prize? Not because it was an engrossing story of the WWII Navy, which it was. Rather because it has all the elements that make a novel great. Herman Wouk is brilliant at characterization and unlike many other good characterizers such as Steven King, he does it almost with the brevity of a Hemingway. With just a few descriptive scenes of Queeg, the reader can already understand him and pity him recognizing that he is not a traditional villain but a flawed and sad neurotic. From the rolling of the balls to the "sinking of his head into his shoulders" to his way of saying "kay" instead of okay, Queeg's flaws are laid out. When he manipulates reality to justify his actions, one can feel sorry for him rather than hate him. He ultimately comes across as a sad and tragic figure. As for the others, Willie Keith is the protagonist and no character undergoes greater growth than him. This is really what the novel is about, Willie's coming of age and it is a great coming of age story. Rather than have his protagonist mature against the crucible of great battle (as he later does with a number of characters in *War and Remembrance* which is much more of an epic but not as great a novel), he chooses to portray the day to day existence of a backwater minesweeper which is just on the periphery of the war. And by doing so he avoids all the standard cliches which is also what makes this novel great. In the end,

the book clearly has no villains except circumstance. Even Keefer, the pseudo-intellectual who really causes all the trouble, is way to self-aware of his own flaws to be villainous (he is mentally healthy by contrast with Queeg who cannot face up to a single flaw or mistake in himself) I could go on and on but this book is an American classic that doesn't seem one bit dated despite its 1951 publication date. I recommend it to anyone who likes literature.

For good reason, Herman Wouk was awarded the Pulitzer prize for his writing of the Caine Mutiny. The book has everything one could ask for in a book. It is incredibly well written. He has in-depth character development. It takes place during a war so action is a prevalent theme. A love story lurks in the background. The conclusion holds one of the greatest courtroom dramas in modern writing. First the war backdrop: no one describes it better. The reader truly understands the feelings of the crew of the USS Caine. We can see the tension of war as well as the feelings of serving in the Navy. Wouk does not hesitate to illustrate the good and bad of this perspective. The love story just hangs on throughout the book and keeps the reader on edge attempting to find out what happens. For much of the book it seems the love story is forgotten. Just when it seems that we will never hear what happened, Wouk ties it in unexpectedly but in a very shrewd manner. Of course the courtroom drama (which went on to spawn a separate play) is the best military court martial story I have read. The reader truly feels as if they are in the courtroom. Wouk never hesitates to provide a great deal of descriptive visualizations and in-depth character development. These truly aid the reader in his quest to finish the book. Honestly, I was moved at times and could not wait to find out the conclusion. I recommend this book to anyone and everyone.

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