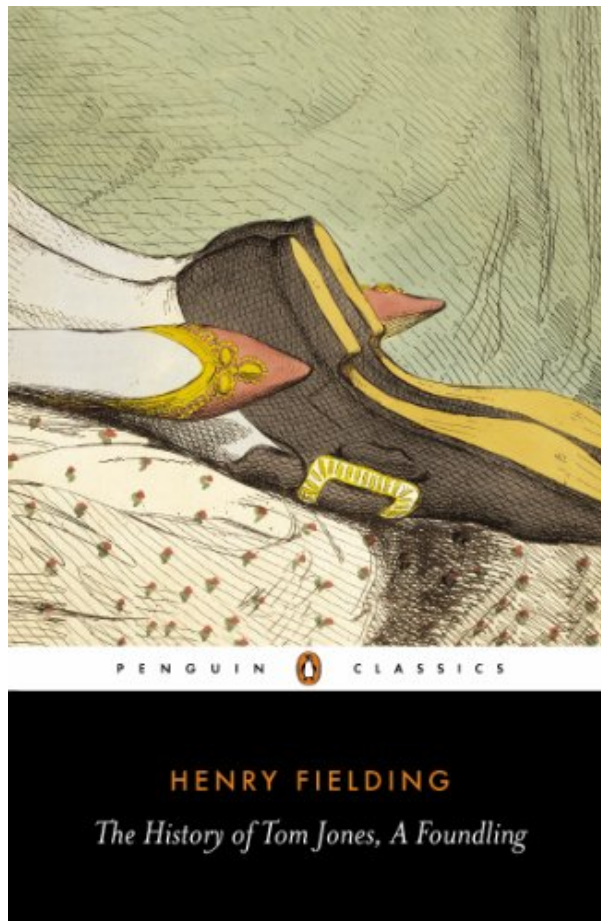


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Amazon.com Review

Tom Jones isn't a bad guy, but boys just want to have fun. Nearly two and a half centuries after its publication, the adventures of the rambunctious and randy Tom Jones still makes for great reading. I'm not in the habit of using words like bawdy or rollicking, but if you look them up in the dictionary, you should see a picture of this book.

From School Library Journal

Grade 9 Up-A full caste dramatization brings to life this romp through 18th century England.
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Review

“Two hundred years have not dimmed Fielding’s realism. His humor is closer to our own than that of any writer before the present century.”—Kingsley Amis

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A foundling of mysterious parentage brought up by Mr. Allworthy on his country estate, Tom Jones is deeply in love with the seemingly unattainable Sophia Western, the beautiful daughter of the neighboring squire—though he sometimes succumbs to the charms of the local girls. When Tom is banished to make his own fortune and Sophia follows him to London to escape an arranged marriage, the adventure begins. A vivid Hogarthian panorama of eighteenth-century life, spiced with danger and intrigue, bawdy exuberance and good-natured authorial interjections, Tom Jones is one of the greatest and most ambitious comic novels in English literature.

- Includes a chronology, suggestions for further reading, notes, glossary, and an appendix of Fielding's revisions
- Introduction discusses narrative techniques and themes, the context of eighteenth-century fiction and satire, and the historical and political background of the Jacobite revolution

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108 of 112 people found the following review helpful.

A comedy classic for all time

By JLind555

It says a great deal for "Tom Jones" that after more than 200 years, it's still as fresh and alive as it was when Henry Fielding wrote it. Tom is a foundling who turns up in good Squire Allworthy's bed on the night he is born; he's given the surname of Jones because the household believes that his mother is Jenny Jones, a local lady of somewhat easy virtue. Squire Allworthy, out of pity for the foundling, raises him as his own son, along with his loathsome nephew Blifil, but it looks like Tom and his supposed mother have more than a little in common. To put it bluntly, Tom is no better than he should be. He's wild, rowdy, a womanizer, perpetually in some kind of trouble; but his heart is in the right place even if he thinks with the wrong head most of the time. He's kind, decent, affectionate, generous to a fault, everything his sneaky, tattletale, obnoxious cousin isn't. He's also in love with his neighbor Squire Western's daughter Sophia, who is very much in love with him; but Western has decided that Sophia is to marry not Tom but Blifil, and Sophia can't stand the creep. So when Tom is turned out of Allworthy's house on a trumped-up charge of aiding and abetting a criminal, Sophia runs away from her father's house to avoid being forced into marrying Blifil, and they both make their separate ways to London, where the book's action culminates.

Fielding crafted his novel almost perfectly; of the 18 chapters in the book, the first third take place on Squire Allworthy's and Squire Western's country estates, the second third on the road to London, and the third in London itself. In the exact middle of the book is the hilarious adventure at the inn at Upton, where all the characters, unknown to each other, briefly converge. When the characters all come together in London, Tom finds out his real parentage, Blifil gets what he deserves, and the story, like all good stories, ends happily ever after.

The most common criticism leveled at Fielding and "Tom Jones" when it was first published was that it was crass, low-down and didn't set the high moral tone expected of writers of his time. Fielding pulled no punches in writing this book. One of his most delicious characters is the hard-drinking, ham-fisted Squire Western, who has all the finesse of a bull in a china closet and calls it as he sees it (his description of Lady Bellaston is dead-on); and in Jenny Jones, he presents a lady of ill-repute in so sympathetic and likeable a way that she appeals to us much more than if she had been a prim and proper female. But Fielding knows what moral and immoral really are; Tom Jones, for all his faults, is truly good, just as Blifil, for all his pious moralizing, is truly evil. What's most refreshing about "Tom Jones" is that Fielding has presented us with characters that are truly believable; we see them in three dimensions, warts and all. "Tom Jones" brings us 18th century England as it was; raw, vibrant, bursting with life and energy. It's a book for its own time, our time, and all time.

30 of 30 people found the following review helpful.

The Story of a Foundling

By mp

It was about time I read "Tom Jones." Fielding's 1749 novel gives us a panoramic view of 18th century British life. Its titular hero journeys among the low- and high-born trying to find his way in a world in which he occupies a precarious position. Fielding uses the sprawl of 800 pages to explore a multitude of social, political, and literary issues, gluing them together with an exquisitely outlandish, fully embodied sense of humour.

The action of the novel begins with a view of the Allworthy family, a landed gentleman, Thomas Allworthy and his sister, Bridget. Into this family is dropped an orphan, a foundling - a child, if you will, of questionable parentage. This child, Tom Jones, is raised alongside Bridget's child, Blifil, as relative equals.

Both are tutored by two ideologues, the philosopher Square and the theologian Thwackum. Jones is a precocious, free-spirited youngster, spoiled by Allworthy while Blifil, the heir apparent to the estate, becomes the favourite pupil and spoiled accordingly by his mother. As the two youths age, Tom develops a fondness for the neighbour's daughter, Sophia Western.

Tom's sexual development begins to get him in trouble, as it tends to throughout the novel, and as a result of one such incident, coupled with the goading jealousy of Blifil, Tom is driven out of the Allworthy home, left to seek his fortunes in the world. Meeting his supposed father, Partridge, on the road, the two begin a quixotic ramble across England. Sophia, meanwhile, pressured into marrying Blifil, runs away from home, beginning her own voyage of discovery.

"Tom Jones" begins with the narrator likening literature to a meal, in which the paying customer comes expecting to be entertained and satisfied. All 18 books of "Tom Jones" start out with such authorial intrusions, each cluing us into the writer's craft, his interactions with his public, and various other topics. This voice is actually sustained throughout the novel, providing a supposedly impartial centre of moral value judgments - each of which seems to tend toward enforce Fielding's project of a realistic, and yet, didactic portrayal of a world full of flawed characters.

Some of the issues the novel deals most extensively with are modes of exchange, anxieties over female agency, and the power of rumour and reputation. Exchange and the ways in which value is figured include a wide range of goods - money, bodies, food, and stories - and are integral to the story. The treatment of women is a great concern in "Tom Jones": from Partridge's perpetual fear of witchcraft to the raging arguments between Squire Western and his sister over how Sophia should be treated, to general concerns about sexuality and virtue. A novel that can be in turns hilarious, disturbing, and provoking, "Tom Jones" is never dull. Despite its size, the pace of the novel is extremely fast and lively. So, get thee to a superstore and obtain thyself a copy of this excellent and highly entertaining novel.

34 of 36 people found the following review helpful.

One of the Best!

By Amazon Customer

I first picked up Tom Jones because to put it bluntly I am a bibliophile and it was a cheap book. However, I was suprised at how engaging and hilarious the story was despite the claims on the back cover, which are often far off. To tell the truth I did not expect to make it through this extremely lengthy tome, I only wanted to satisfy my curiosity.

Although I am a fan of Jane Austen I was shocked by the freshness and wit that Fielding's writing still retains. Every book in the novel begins with an essay by the author. Do not skip these, they are one of the best features of the book. My favorite is the essay before the ninth book which explains the purpose of these introductory chapters. What a riot!

The story of big hearted and big appetited Tom Jones and his adventures and misadventures is one long satirical gem. Fielding's interpretation of morals, piousness, love, and high society is still as hilarious and relevant as it was in the 18th century. For anyone who appreciates wit and history, this is a must read.

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