

Grand Hotel (New York Review Books Classics)

By Vicki Baum



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A grand hotel in the center of 1920s Berlin serves as a microcosm of the modern world in Vicki Baum's celebrated novel, a Weimar-era best seller that retains all its verve and luster today. Among the guests of the hotel is Doctor Otternschlag, a World War I veteran whose face has been sliced in half by a shell. Day after day he emerges to read the paper in the lobby, discreetly inquiring at the desk if the letter he's been awaiting for years has arrived. Then there is Grusinskaya, a great ballerina now fighting a losing battle not so much against age as against her fear of it, who may or may not be made for Gaigern, a sleek professional thief. Herr Preysing also checks in, the director of a family firm that isn't as flourishing as it appears, who would never imagine that Kringelein, his underling, a timorous petty clerk he's bullied for years, has also come to Berlin, determined to live at last now that he's received a medical death sentence. All these characters and more, with all their secrets and aspirations, come together and come alive in the pages of Baum's delicious and disturbing masterpiece.



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Editorial Review

Review

"The legacy of Baum's novel is not just the 1932 MGM film starring John Barrymore and Greta Garbo (and the 1980s Broadway musical), but all those star-stuffed movies and fat popular novels...in which some institution or event serves as the setting for the intersecting individual dramas. What distinguishes the book from its plump progeny is not only its relatively modest length but the delicacy of Baum's writing...The book is kin to both the stories of Stefan Zweig and the films of Max Ophüls, both artists who chronicled devastating loss but drew our eye to the exquisite fluidity with which the most precious things slid through their characters' elegant, manicured fingers." —*Kirkus* starred review

"Through the revolving doors of *Grand Hotel* pass multifarious stray souls: some resigned to their drab fates, others searching eagerly for life—all persuaded that it has somehow passed them by. We meet them as they come under the practiced eye of the staff, expert in Weimar Berlin's taxonomies of class. Like George Grosz, Vicki Baum renders human foibles at their most pathetic, despicable, and comical, then turns her characters inside out, until we recognize our own hopes and fears refracted in them." —Holly Brubach

"The author's strength is creating compelling characters with sexual attitudes that feel contemporary. *Grand Hotel* prefigures *Downtown Abbey* and *Upstairs, Downstairs* by examining multiple characters from different classes (both guests and the hotel staff) in a single-setting microcosm of society and lives up to its reputation as a modern classic." —Kevin Howell, *Shelf Awareness*

"A spiritual motion picture of modern life, the characteristics, the cross-currents of thought and emotion, of this new age." —J. B. Priestley

"[Told] with unusual skill and distinguished by an acute perception of minor detail."—George Dangerfield, *The Bookman*

"One of the most perfectly constructed popular novels in modern literature."—Frank N. Magill, editor of *Masterplots, Revised Edition*

About the Author

Vicki Baum (1888–1960) was born into an affluent Jewish family in Vienna. Her childhood was dominated by a depressed mother and an authoritarian, hypochondriac father, who discouraged her early forays into literature. She studied harp at the Vienna Academy for Music and the Performing Arts and left home at eighteen to marry Max Prels, a journalist under whose name her first short stories were published. In 1916, after the dissolution of her first marriage, she married the conductor Richard Lert and launched her literary career, eventually writing nearly a book a year while working as an editor at the German publishing house Ullstein. Her first major success came in 1920 with the publication of her second novel, *Once in Vienna*. She spent several months in New York and Hollywood during the making of the film adaptation of *Grand Hotel*—which starred Greta Garbo and Joan Crawford and went on to win the 1933 Oscar for Best Film—and, before Hitler's rise to power, resettled in Los Angeles, where she continued to publish novels while also working as a screenwriter for Paramount and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Her memoir, *It Was All Ouite Different*, was published posthumously.

Basil Creighton (1886–1989) translated many notable works of German literature, including Hermann Hesse's *Steppenwolf*, B. Traven's *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, and Alma Mahler's *Gustav Mahler:*

Memories and Letters.

Margot Bettauer Dembo has translated works by Judith Hermann, Robert Gernhardt, Joachim Fest, Ödön von Horváth, and Feridun Zaimoglu, among others. She was awarded the Goethe-Institut/Berlin Translator's Prize in 1994 and the Helen and Kurt Wolff Translator's Prize in 2003. Dembo has also worked as a translator for two feature documentary films: *The Restless Conscience*, which was nominated for an Academy Award, and *The Burning Wall*. Her translation of *Transit* by Anna Seghers was published by NYRB Classics in 2013.

Noah Isenberg is a professor of culture and media at the New School, where he also serves as the director of screen studies. He is the author of several books on film, a regular contributor to *Bookforum*, *The Nation*, and the *Times Literary Supplement*, and the book review editor of *Film Quarterly*. Isenberg is a fellow at the New York Institute for the Humanities and the recipient of a 2015 NEH Public Scholar award.

Users Review

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Sylvia Johnson:

The book Grand Hotel (New York Review Books Classics) make one feel enjoy for your spare time. You need to use to make your capable a lot more increase. Book can being your best friend when you getting stress or having big problem with the subject. If you can make examining a book Grand Hotel (New York Review Books Classics) being your habit, you can get considerably more advantages, like add your current capable, increase your knowledge about a few or all subjects. You are able to know everything if you like start and read a reserve Grand Hotel (New York Review Books Classics). Kinds of book are several. It means that, science guide or encyclopedia or others. So, how do you think about this guide?

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Enrique Boggs:

Spent a free time to be fun activity to try and do! A lot of people spent their spare time with their family, or all their friends. Usually they carrying out activity like watching television, planning to beach, or picnic within the park. They actually doing same thing every week. Do you feel it? Would you like to something different to fill your own free time/ holiday? Could be reading a book might be option to fill your free of charge time/ holiday. The first thing that you will ask may be what kinds of reserve that you should read. If you want to test look for book, may be the guide untitled Grand Hotel (New York Review Books Classics)

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