



Buddenbrooks - The Original Classic Edition

Thomas Mann

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Buddenbrooks was Thomas Manns first novel, published in 1901 when he was twenty-six years old. The publication of the 2nd edition in 1903 confirmed that Buddenbrooks was a major literary success in Germany.

It portrays the downfall (already announced in the subtitle, Decline of a Family) of a wealthy mercantile family of Lübeck over four generations. The book is generally understood as a portrait of the German bourgeois society throughout several decades of the 19th century. The book displays Manns characteristic detailed style, and it was this novel which won Mann the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1929, although according to Manns wife this achievement would not have occurred without the publication of *The Magic Mountain*.

Manns objective was to write a novel on the conflicts between businessman and artists worlds, presented as a family saga, continuing in the realist tradition of 19th century works such as Stendhals *Le Rouge et le noir* (1830; *The Red and the Black*). More personally, he wanted to surpass the literary status already achieved by his eldest brother Heinrich Mann, who met relative success with the novel *In einer Familie* (1894, *In a Family*), and who was working at that time on another novel about German bourgeois society, *Im Schlaraffenland* (1900, *In the Land of Cockaigne*). It can be said that both of Thomas Manns objectives were satisfied. The novel stands today as one of his most popular, especially in Germany, and is considered by many to be the novel that best captures the 19th century German bourgeois atmosphere.

The exploration of decadence in the novel can be attributed to the profound influence of Arthur Schopenhauer on Thomas Mann during his youth. The three generations of the family depicted in the book experience a continuous economical, physical, and spiritual decline, with true happiness becoming increasingly unavailable to all the members of the family.

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