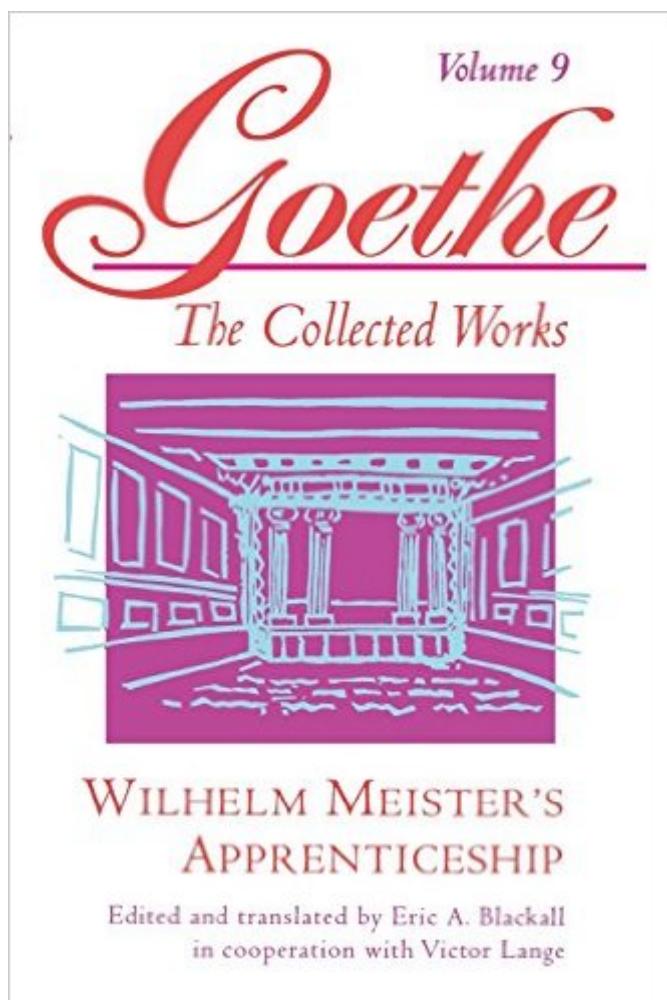


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Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship: Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe (Goethe: The Collected Works, Vol. 9)



Synopsis

Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship, a novel of self-realization greatly admired by the Romantics, has been called the first Bildungsroman and has had a tremendous influence on the history of the German novel. The story centers on Wilhelm, a young man living in the mid-1700s who strives to break free from the restrictive world of economics and seeks fulfillment as an actor and playwright. Along with Eric Blackall's fresh translation of the work, this edition contains notes and an afterword by the translator that aims to put this novel into historical and artistic perspective for twentieth-century readers while showing how it defies categorization.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As one of the most prolific and multi-talented authors to ever set words to page, Goethe is often considered the master of early romantic works and even the patriarch of the modern novel. Fittingly, Goethe's numerous interests and talents, including law, geology, science and literature, come to life in *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* the precursor to *Wilhelm Meister's Journeyman Years*. I caution all those who pick up this book to do so with grit and determination for it is not light reading. The density and complexity of the piece can be discouraging and the sometimes fantastical character encounters can leave you with a sense of shallowness and predictability. These opinions, however, are ones that fade away as the overall impact of the novel begins to set in and alter your perceptions of the world. Goethe's romantic voice can be heard throughout, and, while many readers prefer the

more adventurous and extravagant side of love, the romances here are shockingly harsh and true-to-life, which only add to the benefits of the work. To be sure adventure and extravagance are not spared. Goethe was also the quintessential statesman of his time, and this meant ties to Freemasonry. What can be interpreted as Masonic overtones and undertones add a veil of mystery and adventure to the book, while philosophical exchanges leave the reader with points to consider, even in today's world. My appreciation for this book stems from its uncanny insight into my present life and the lingering ideas it presented to me. Had I not read this novel I would surely be missing something extraordinary today.

Whenever I read Goethe's poems, plays or prose, I'm reminded of his genius. But I have a particularly warm spot in my heart for *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, Goethe's philosophical novel. The story is gripping, the characters majestic and the ideas compelling. The novel's cornerstone is its chapter entitled "Confessions of a Beautiful Soul." That chapter provides the thread that ties together the book's plot and characters to its philosophy. In that chapter and what follows -- no less than in his *Faust* -- Goethe provides a glimpse of lives that he views to be truly worth living. My advice is to read the *Sorrows of Young Werther*, in which Goethe shows what it means to be an immature, impetuous post-adolescent, and then read *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, and learn what it means to evolve into a wise, contended adult. On the surface, *Werther* was Goethe's great tragedy, but if you ask me, the real tragedy is that *Meister* is rarely read in modern America. Hopefully, the book will soon have a renaissance. Lord knows it deserves one.

No, this isn't the latest *da Vinci* code. But it isn't half as bad as some of the reviews make it out to be. Yes, this is a very philosophical novel. It was written a couple of centuries ago and thus reflects the conditions of the time. Yet it captures in universal terms the uncertainties faced by an adolescent as he takes his place in society. This is the reason it was taken as a template for such novels over a period of a hundred years in Germany. For contemporary literature treating the same topic there are obviously better alternatives, but for an understanding of how individuality shaped the modern world, this is an excellent place to begin your investigations.

German phrase, meaning "novel that raises (characteres)", very common type of a novel in 18th century best describes this book. *Wilhelm Meister* alter ego of Goethe himself advances through stages of life consisting from theatre to salesman to "one that shall be married with someone of higher class than he". In the mouth of his characters, that are not entirely fictional, Goethe develops

problems which he sees as an important factor in a world that he had lived. Ranging from his views of national theatre, national literature (as presented by von Herder or the whole cultural situation in the world in those days) to the morale, marriage, love and successfullnes of any type. Though presented in typically romantic manner this book is read very easy, you'll just need to accomodate yourself to the language and way of thinking of 18th century, which can be looked upon as somewhat naive....especially considering some recent works that have been written around same theme. Insightfull view to the German romantic novel which you may like or you may not (as it is with any other book)...wouldn't recomend to someone who just started to discover the brilliant world of literature, this book searches for highly tuned reader who has much interest (and much knowledge) of the 18th century world...

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