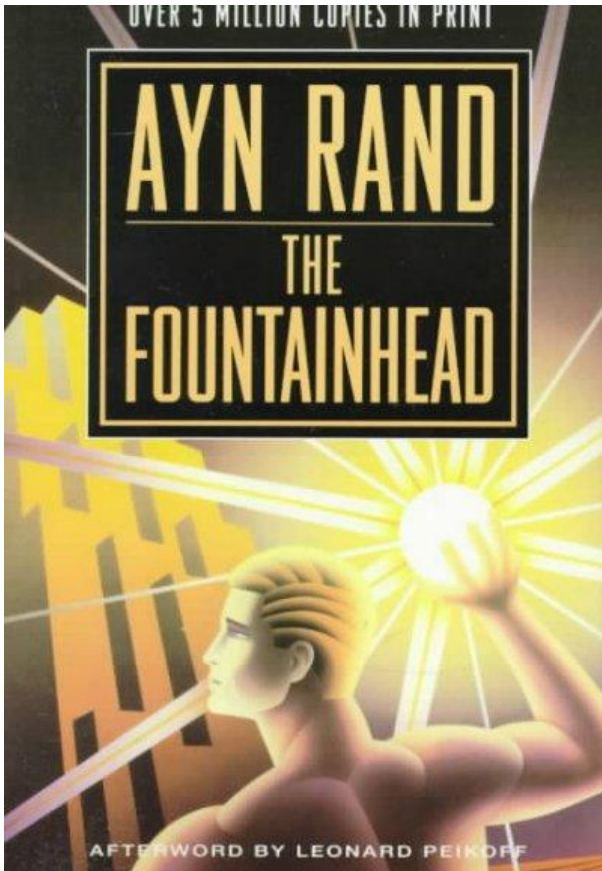


About the book...



Howard Roark, is a young architect who chooses to struggle in obscurity rather than compromise his artistic and personal vision. The book follows his battle to practice what the public sees as modern architecture, which he believes to be superior, despite an establishment centered on tradition-worship. How others in the novel relate to Roark demonstrates Rand's various archetypes of human character, all of which are variants between Roark, the author's ideal man of independent-mindedness and integrity, and what she described as the "second-handers." The complex relationships between Roark and the various kinds of individuals who assist or hinder his progress, or both, allow the novel to be at once a romantic drama and a philosophical work. By Rand's own admission, Roark is the embodiment of the human spirit and his struggle represents the triumph of individualism over collectivism.

About the author... (<http://www.aynrand.org>)



Ayn Rand was born in St. Petersburg, Russia, on February 2, 1905. At age six she taught herself to read and two years later discovered her first fictional hero in a French magazine for children, thus capturing the heroic vision which sustained her throughout her life. At the age of nine, she decided to make fiction writing her career. Thoroughly opposed to the mysticism and collectivism of Russian culture, she thought of herself as a European writer, especially after encountering Victor Hugo, the writer she most admired.

During her high school years, she was eyewitness to both the Kerensky Revolution, which she supported, and—in 1917—the Bolshevik Revolution, which she denounced from the outset. In order to escape the fighting, her family went to the Crimea, where she finished high school. The final Communist victory brought the confiscation of her father's pharmacy and periods of near-starvation. When introduced to American history in her last year of high school, she immediately took America as her model of what a nation of free men could be.

When her family returned from the Crimea, she entered the University of Petrograd to study philosophy and history. Graduating in 1924, she experienced the disintegration of free inquiry and the takeover of the university by communist thugs. Amidst the increasingly gray life, her greatest pleasures were Viennese operettas and Western films and plays. Long an admirer of cinema, she entered the State Institute for Cinema Arts in 1924 to study screenwriting. It was at this time that she was first published: a booklet on actress Pola Negri (1925) and a booklet titled "Hollywood: American Movie City" (1926), both reprinted in 1999 in *Russian Writings on Hollywood*.

In late 1925 she obtained permission to leave Soviet Russia for a visit to relatives in the United States. Although she told Soviet authorities that her visit would be short, she was determined never to return to Russia. She arrived in New York City in February 1926. She spent the next six months with her relatives in Chicago, obtained an extension to her visa, and then left for Hollywood to pursue a career as a screenwriter.

On Ayn Rand's second day in Hollywood, Cecil B. DeMille saw her standing at the gate of his studio, offered her a ride to the set of his movie *The King of Kings*, and gave her a job, first as an extra, then as a script reader. During the next week at the studio, she met an actor, Frank O'Connor, whom she married in 1929; they were married until his death fifty years later.

After struggling for several years at various nonwriting jobs, including one in the wardrobe department at the RKO Radio Pictures, Inc., she sold her first screenplay, "Red Pawn," to Universal Pictures in 1932 and saw her first stage play, *Night of January 16th*, produced in Hollywood and then on Broadway. Her first novel, *We the Living*, was completed in 1934 but was rejected by numerous publishers, until The Macmillan Company in the United States and Cassells and Company in England published the book in 1936. The most autobiographical of her novels, it was based on her years under Soviet tyranny.

She began writing *The Fountainhead* in 1935 (taking a short break in 1937 to write the anti-collectivist novelette *Anthem*). In the character of the architect Howard Roark, she presented for the first time the kind of hero whose depiction was the chief goal of her writing: the ideal man as "he could be and ought to be." *The Fountainhead* was rejected by twelve publishers but finally accepted by the Bobbs-Merrill Company. When published in 1943, it made history by becoming a best-seller through word of mouth two years later, and gained for its author lasting recognition as a champion of individualism.

Ayn Rand returned to Hollywood in late 1943 to write the screenplay for *The Fountainhead*, but wartime restrictions delayed production until 1948. Working part time as a screenwriter for Hal Wallis Productions, she began her major novel *Atlas Shrugged*,

in 1946. In 1951 she moved back to New York City and devoted herself full time to the completion of *Atlas Shrugged*.

Published in 1957, *Atlas Shrugged* was her greatest achievement and last work of fiction. In this novel she dramatized her unique philosophy in an intellectual mystery story.. Although she considered herself primarily a fiction writer, she realized that in order to create heroic fictional characters, she had to identify the philosophic principles which make such individuals possible.

Thereafter, Ayn Rand wrote and lectured on her philosophy—Objectivism, which she characterized as "a philosophy for living on earth." She published and edited her own periodicals from 1962 to 1976, her essays providing much of the material for six books on Objectivism and its application to the culture.. Ayn Rand died on March 6, 1982, in her New York City apartment.

Reviews

Kirkus Reviews

This is almost a first rate novel. It falls short, as do so many modern novels, in the apparent inability of the author (or editor) to be a ruthless surgeon. The story would have been faster paced, the characters more sharply limned, had whole episodes, repetitive and tautological, been eliminated; had long speeches been cut to hare bones. In spite of this excess of verbiage, the novel is a telling one -- and original. Ayn Rand showed in the *Living* (Macmillan, 1936) an ability to handle groups of people and shifting impacts convincingly, with implicit drama. She has told this time the story of an idealistic young architect, who refused to compromise with popular taste or accepted practice, who starved in the process, but who finally won through to success, as the foremost modernist of his time. A stormy romance crashes across his path, fraught with danger and passion and disillusionment and triumph. Jealousies and hates and resentments cannot touch him, for architecture is his god; and the little spiteful people who thrust at him get punished in the rebound. Others get hurt, too, and Ayn Rand makes full use of a chance to blast the forces of conservatism, of reaction, of compromise. Unfortunately, she falls for the lure of the soapbox, unnecessarily, as her story would have done the trick for her. A contemporary novel.

Critics Say. . .

Ayn Rand is a writer of great power. She has a subtle and ingenious mind and the capacity of writing brilliantly, beautifully, bitterly.... [*The Fountainhead*] is a long but absorbing story of man's enduring battle with evil. This is the only novel of ideas written by an American woman that I can recall....

Miss Rand has taken a stand against collectivism, "the rule of the second-hander, the ancient monster" which has brought men "to a level of intellectual indecency never equaled on earth." She has written a hymn in praise of the individual and has said things worth saying in these days. Whether her antithesis between altruism and selfishness is logically correct or not, she has written a powerful indictment.

~ Lorraine Purette - New York Times, 5/16/1943

Literary Criticism

Title: Critical Essay on *The Fountainhead*

Author(s): Tamara Sakuda

Source: **Novels for Students**. Ed. David M. Galens. Vol. 16. Detroit: Gale, 2003. From *Literature Resource Center*.

Document Type: Critical essay

Full Text: COPYRIGHT 2002 Gale Group, COPYRIGHT 2007 Gale, Cengage Learning

Ayn Rand believed in the value of individual worth above all else. She felt the ideal man had a selfish desire to express his own truths no matter what the cost. Rand's novel, ***The Fountainhead***, demonstrates the importance of man's struggle for independence and freedom from the tyranny of a collective society. The protagonist, or hero, of ***The Fountainhead*** is Howard Roark. Roark is a man of integrity who is driven to create by his values and his values alone. Other people's thoughts and criticisms do not sway Roark from his architectural dreams and he selfishly clings to these values. Throughout the book, his work is ridiculed and publicly condemned. His buildings are thought to be poorly designed and monstrous. Roark says the pain of criticism only reaches a part of him; it does not engulf him. The ability of Roark to withstand his detractors shows the strength of his ego. He has an absolute belief in the validity of his own ideas. As Mimi Reisel Gladstein states in *The Ayn Rand Companion*, "What Rand puts forth in ***The Fountainhead*** is a rationale for 'selfishness' or egoism as a moral good."

He is not sustained by the thoughts of others but by his own selfish need to create, to unleash the buildings that live inside his soul.

The Fountainhead opens with Roark contemplating his expulsion from the Architectural School of the Stanton Institute of Technology. Instead of being devastated by this, Roark laughs to himself as he remembers the actual meeting. Later as he enters the porch of his boarding house, his landlady extends her apologies, but the words do not register with Roark. He is not distraught by the expulsion. Roark's own belief in his talent arms him for the next phase of his career--a career as an architect. Although Roark is confident of his destiny, his dean and his landlady are convinced his judgment and values are flawed. In their view, Roark is doomed to fail.

Juxtaposed to the character of Roark is Peter Keating. He is the son of Roark's Stanton landlady. Just as Roark's character is used to represent the power of individualism, Rand uses Keating's character to represent the failure of collectivism. Keating is described as handsome and "president of the student body, captain of the track team, member of the most important fraternity and voted the most popular man on campus." Keating is a joiner or, as Rand describes him later in the book, a second-hander. Keating is someone who

defines himself by what others believe. He has no true sense of self because he is too impressionable.

Keating graduates first in his class from the same school that expelled Roark. He is offered a job at the most prestigious architectural firm in New York City. Instead of being overjoyed, Keating is full of self-doubt. Should he accept the job offer? Or should he accept a scholarship to study architecture in France? He turns to Roark for advice, which Roark refuses to give. As Keating readies himself for life in New York City, he is still full of doubt, although his mother and dean are convinced his judgment is sound. "But if that boy isn't the greatest architect of this U.S.A., his mother will want to know why!" says Mrs. Keating.

Roark and Keating begin their lives in New York. Keating tries to be all things to all people. He manipulates his co-workers to his advantage, flatters the ego of his boss, Guy Francon, and feigns an interest in rare porcelain to impress his boss's partner. His antics ingratiate him to his superiors. Keating quickly moves up the ranks in the firm. He is considered the golden boy of the architectural world--talented, successful, the man to emulate.

However, Keating still turns to Roark for advice on building design and hates himself for doing so. He is envious of Roark. Roark is not considered successful, but Roark also has no fears, no self doubts. As someone who depends on others for his self worth, Keating lives in fear: fear that his work will not be thought good enough, fear that he cannot measure up to what others expect of him, fear that someday his success will vanish. "Others gave Keating a sense of his own value. Roark gave him nothing. He thought he should seize his drawings and run. The danger was not Roark. The danger was that he, Keating remained."

Roark struggles in his early career. He seeks employment with the only architect whose work he admires, Henry Cameron. After an initial flush of success, Cameron's career spirals downward. When Roark finds him, Cameron is a tired, bitter man who is rejected by his peers. He initially refuses to hire Roark until he discovers the beauty and talent of Roark's drawings. Cameron's firm is a poor one financially, and he cannot afford to pay Roark a decent wage. This does not matter to Roark. He is content and learns a great deal from Cameron. Unlike Keating, the outward trappings of success do not matter to Roark. He is not sustained by the thoughts of others but by his own selfish need to create, to unleash the buildings that live inside his soul.

As Rand moves through the story of Keating and Roark, other characters are introduced who illustrate the continued theme of individualism versus collectivism. For example, Rand's selfish characters are those who do not depend on others for their self worth. They are driven to produce their life's work with no thought as to how it will be received by others. These characters are the creators in her story. Austen Heller, respected newspaper columnist, gives Roark his first commission and \$500 to start an office. The house Roark designs and builds for

Heller is ridiculed, but Heller does not care. He believes in Roark and remains a staunch defender throughout the story. Steven Mallory is a gifted sculptor who is rejected by the mainstream art world of New York. After Keating rejects Mallory's sculpture for his building, Mallory attempts to shoot a famous critic. In explaining his actions to Roark, Mallory delineates an important distinction in the struggle for the individual against the collective. He speaks of "poor fools" who cannot recognize greatness, but to Mallory the greater sin is "to see it and not want it." Mallory is speaking of the critic who recognizes great art but tries to destroy it so that the collective can be maintained.

Roark calls Rand's conformist characters "second-handers." These characters have no sense of self except what others give to them. Gordon Prescott is an architect who leads his public to believe he is a man of new vision and ideals. In reality, Prescott just puts old design techniques to new uses. Prescott fits Roark's definition of a second-hander because he "borrowed from others to in order to make an impression on others." Prescott's talent and thoughts are second rate and second hand.

Catherine Halsey is another second-hander. She is a timid wisp of a girl who is in love with Keating. However, Keating's mother and Catherine's uncle influence her against marrying him. Keating professes his love for Catherine but he ends up jilting her in favor of another woman with more status. Catherine then devotes herself to a life of social work, not because she wants this as a career, but because her uncle decides her path for her. Years later, Keating runs into Catherine and asks her to lunch. His attempts to apologize are brushed away. To Keating, his love for the timid Catherine was real. To Catherine, the bitter social worker, that love never existed.

Throughout the story, Roark is placed at odds with the second-handers. For instance, Cameron becomes ill and must close his office. Roark looks for work elsewhere. Keating hires him but Roark is soon fired because he refuses to compromise his ideals. This refusal creates setbacks for Roark. He is forced to work in a granite quarry. It is hard, manual labor. This shocks and saddens Roark's friends but not Roark. He continues to believe in himself, as he tells his friend Mike, "I'll save enough money and come back. Or maybe someone will send for me before then." Roark is not embittered by his outward situation. He is still an individual with value. His buildings are still there inside of him and he knows he will create them someday.

It is while working at the granite quarry, that Roark meets Dominique Francon. She is the daughter of Keating's boss and an ideal beauty. An explosive love affair soon follows. It is a difficult relationship. Mimi Reisel Gladstein in her book, *The Ayn Rand Companion*, characterizes Dominique as someone who is convinced that good does not stand a chance in this world and as a result does not let herself care about anything. Then she meets Howard Roark. Dominique vows to destroy Roark, even while admitting that she loves him, because she feels Roark

and his work are too good for this world. Dominique is not a second-hander, but she does fear happiness. Roark amazingly takes Dominique's confession in stride. He sees the inner beauty and potential in Dominique. He is confident in his love for her, and he is confident that Dominique can come to love him openly on her own terms. Even when Dominique marries Keating, Roark tells her,

You must learn not to be afraid of this world. Not to be held by it as you are now. Never to be hurt by it as you were in that courtroom. I must let you learn it. I can't help you. You must find your own way. When you have, you'll come back to me.

While Rand consistently pits second-handers like Keating against Roark, there is one character, which is a true villain in this story--Ellsworth Toohey. Rand describes Toohey as fragile looking, like a "chicken just emerging from the egg." Toohey is anything but fragile inside. He thrives on power and its accumulation. He purports to be a truly selfless hero: someone who cares for the masses and the struggles of the mediocre man. In reality he uses the weaknesses of others to control them. In his childhood, his aunt saw through him and said, "You're a maggot Elsie, you feed on sores." "Then I'll never starve," was his reply. He uses his positions of newspaper columnist, lecturer, and author to advance what he deems appropriate in art, architecture, novels, etc. It is through Toohey's control of collective opinion that he achieves power. As Roark's work begins to receive acclaim, Toohey looks for ways to destroy him. Toohey realizes the threat of a selfish, independent man. Men like Roark do not stand for mediocrity. Toohey cannot influence Roark. Even worse, if Roark achieves fame, then he will influence men, not Toohey.

The Fountainhead culminates with a trial. Roark is accused of blowing up a government housing project. He designed the project with the provision that it is built to his specifications. When the building is changed; he blows it up. Roark defends himself at the trial. It is Roark who chooses his jury. It is a panel made up of: "two executives of industrial concerns, two engineers, a mathematician, a truck driver, a bricklayer, an electrician, a gardener, and three factory workers." The jury is described as tough but Roark chose wisely. Most of these men have the capacity to create and be independent in their chosen work. These men know what it is like to experience the exhilaration of creation. Others on the jury, the factory workers, surely know how it feels to be yoked to the collective of mediocrity.

It is during Roark's final arguments that he emerges as a truly selfish hero. Roark speaks of those men who throughout the ages have been creators. "The great creators--the thinkers, the artists, the scientists, the inventors--stood alone against the men of their time." Roark talks of how all inventions were initially opposed or considered foolish. He speaks of the need for independence. "The creator lives for his work. He needs no other men. His primary goal is within

himself. The parasite lives second-hand. He needs others. Others become his prime motive."

Roark believes that to be a hero he must be selfish. According to Mimi Reisel Gladstone in *The Ayn Rand Companion*, Roark believes that only by living for one's self can one accomplish the extraordinary. Roark also believes that man cannot share his intellect or his creative truths with others. He says there is no such thing as a "collective brain." Roark's buildings are his creations. They belong to him even though others can enjoy them. Rand then uses Roark to prove the primacy of the individual versus the collective. Rand is speaking directly through Roark when he speaks of what he deems a crowning achievement of his values, his country America. Roark believes America is the noblest country on earth. As a Russian immigrant, Rand believed this too. Roark states that American values are not based on the idea of selfless service, but rather on the idea that each man has a right to the pursuit of happiness. "His own happiness. Not anyone else's. A private, personal, selfish motive. Look at the results." Against all odds, the jury finds Roark, the selfish hero, innocent. His actions are vindicated.

At the end of the book, Dominique visits Roark, now her husband, as he is working on his greatest project, a skyscraper commissioned by Mr. Gail Wynand. It was to be a testament to Wynand's life but instead Wynand asks that the building be a monument to Roark's spirit--the spirit of a selfish hero who shows that the value of the individual is what truly matters.

Source Citation

Sakuda, Tamara. "Critical Essay on *The Fountainhead*." *Novels for Students*. Ed. David M. Galens. Vol. 16. Detroit: Gale, 2003. *Literature Resource Center*. Web. 18 July 2011.

Document URL

<http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?&id=GALE%7CH1420044631&v=2.1&u=aadl&it=r&p=LitRC&sw=w>

Discussion questions (<http://us.penguin.com>)

1. When Roark comes uninvited to Dominique's bedroom in his rough, soiled workman's clothes, is the act that he commits rape? Why or why not?
2. Why does Gail Wynand, a self-made media and real-estate millionaire, seek to turn men into hypocrites? Why does he make a socialist defend management and a conservative defend labor?
3. Why does the struggling sculptor Steven Mallory attempt to gun down a famous newspaper columnist who champions the voiceless and the undefended?
4. Why does Peter Keating, a celebrity architect, plead with his unsuccessful and widely condemned friend, Hoard Roark, secretly to design a crucial housing

project for him? Roark is an architect of unmatched integrity who scorns Keating—so why does he agree to do it?

5. Howard Roark refuses a major contract when he most needs it, arguing that his action was "the most selfish thing you've ever seen a man do." Why does he call this action selfish?
6. Why does Roark dynamite Cortlandt Homes? How does he defend his action? Is he a moral man, a practical man, both, or neither?
7. Both Howard Roark and Lois Cook are artists with a unique vision who are not accepted by the mainstream of society. What does Ayn Rand mean by "individualism"? Are they both individualists? Why or why not?
8. What does Ayn Rand mean by the terms "first-hander" and "second-hander"? Cite examples of each type from real life.

Multimedia

"The Fountainhead" (Film) <http://www.aadl.org/catalog/record/1281305>

Readalikes

Daniel Deronda by George Eliot

Daniels Deronda, raised among the British upper classes, discovers his Jewish ancestry and, while struggling to choose between his upbringing and heredity, falls in love with a well-bred woman trapped in an unhappy marriage.

The Eighth Wonder of the World by Leslie Epstein

Traveling to Italy to work with great American architect Amos Prince on the construction of La Vittoria, a monument celebrating Mussolini's victory over Ethiopia, Maximilian Shabilian, a recent Yale graduate, becomes inextricably involved with Prince's family, but finds himself torn between devotion to his mentor and the plight of his fellow Jews under the Fascist regime.

Martin Eden by Jack London

Recounts the story of Martin Eden, a young seaman struggling to obtain social and intellectual recognition as a writer.

Warrior of the Light: A manual by Paul Coelho

A collection of philosophical stories and observations invites readers to live out dreams, embrace the uncertainty of life, and rise to a personal destiny.



Ann Arbor District Library