

Chapter 1 : Greeneland: the world of Graham Greene

The Heart of the Matter () is a novel by English author Graham Greene. The novel details a life-changing moral crisis for Henry Scobie. Greene, a British intelligence officer in Freetown, Sierra Leone, drew on his experience there.

His wife Louise, an unhappy, solitary woman who loves literature and poetry, cannot make friends. Scobie feels responsible for her misery, but does not love her. Their only child, Catherine, died in England several years before. Louise is a devout Catholic. Scobie, a convert, is also devout. Scobie is passed over for promotion to Commissioner, which upsets Louise both for her personal ambition and her hope that the local British community will begin to accept her. Louise asks Scobie if she can go and live in South Africa to escape the life she hates. At the same time, a new inspector, named Wilson, arrives in the town. He is priggish and socially inept, and hides his passion for poetry for fear of ostracism by his colleagues. He and Louise strike up a friendship, which Wilson mistakes for love. Wilson rooms with another colleague named Harris, who has created a sport for himself of killing the cockroaches that appear in the apartment each night. He invites Wilson to join him, but in the first match, they end up quarrelling over the rules of engagement. Scobie finds it, and because it is addressed to someone in Germany, he must confiscate it in case it should contain secret codes or other clandestine information. Scobie declines the bribe and takes the letter, but having opened and read it through thus breaking the rules and finding it innocuous, he decides not to submit it to the authorities, and burns it. Scobie suspects the involvement of the local agent of a Syrian man named Yusef, a local black marketeer. Yusef offers to lend Scobie the money at four per cent per annum. Scobie initially declines, but after an incident where he mistakenly thinks Louise is contemplating suicide, he accepts the loan and sends Louise to South Africa. Wilson meets them at the pier and tries to interfere with their parting. Shortly afterwards, the survivors of a shipwreck begin to arrive after forty days at sea in lifeboats. One young girl dies as Scobie tries to comfort her by pretending to be her father, who was killed in the wreck. A year-old woman named Helen Rolt also arrives malnourished and dehydrated, clutching an album of postage stamps. She was married before the ship left its original port and is now a widow, and her wedding ring is too big for her finger. Scobie feels drawn to her, as much to the cherished album of stamps as to her physical presence, even though she is not beautiful. She reminds him of his daughter. He soon starts a passionate affair with her, all the time being aware that he is committing a grave sin of adultery. After Louise unexpectedly returns, Scobie struggles to keep her ignorant of his love affair. But he is unable to renounce Helen, even in the confessional, where the priest instructs him to think it over and postpones absolution. Still, to placate his wife, Scobie attends Mass with her and receives communion in his state of mortal sin—a sacrilege according to Catholic teaching. Scobie visits Yusef to confront him about the gift but more so to unburden his suspicion that Ali, whom he had trusted for all of their 15 years together, is disloyal. Yusef says he will take care of the matter, which within a few hours ends up in Ali being killed by local teenagers known as "wharf rats". The reader is led to believe that Yusef arranged the killing; however, Scobie blames himself. Having gone this far down the path of ruin and seeing no way out, the proud Scobie decides to free everyone from himself—including God—and plots his death by faking a heart ailment and getting a prescription for sleeping pills. Knowing full well that suicide is the ultimate damnation according to Church doctrine, he proceeds in the end to commit suicide with the pills. The act, however, yields ambiguous results. Helen continues her dreary existence. The concluding chapter consists of a short encounter between Louise and the confessional priest. Major Henry Scobie — Longtime police deputy commissioner and protagonist of the novel. Catherine Scobie — Deceased daughter of Henry and Louise. Edward Wilson — New inspector who secretly spies on the actions of Major Scobie, and is in love with Louise. Yusef — Syrian local black marketeer who blackmails Scobie after finding a letter in which he expresses his love for Helen. Tallit — Catholic Syrian who is the main competitor to Yusef. Father Rank — Local Catholic priest. Father Clay — Catholic priest at Bamba who reads about saints. This section needs additional citations for verification. Please help improve this article by adding citations to reliable sources. Unsourced material may be challenged and

removed. April Learn how and when to remove this template message Graham Greene saw *The Heart of the Matter* as dealing with the issue of pity. He illustrates this theme by describing Scobie, the main character of the book, as "a weak man with good intentions doomed by his big sense of pity". He further says in the preface, "I had meant the story of Scobie to enlarge a theme which I had touched on in *The Ministry of Fear*, the disastrous effect on human beings of pity as distinct from compassion. I had written in *The Ministry of Fear*: In the preface of the novel he notes that the story originally came from a desire on his part to write a detective story where the principal character, the villain, is ignorant of who the detective is. Each character in the novel, be it Scobie or Wilson, fails in their ultimate goals by the end of the book. Other instances of failure, both subtler and more obvious, can be seen throughout the work, lending it a muted, dark feeling. *The Heart of the Matter* is not just about failure, but about the price we all pay for our individualism and the impossibility of truly understanding another person. Each of the characters in the novel operates at tangential purposes which they often think are clear to others, or think are hidden from others, but are in fact not. Scobie throughout the book constantly puts his fears in the voice and context of religion. After his wife returns he has a pathological fear of taking communion while suffering the stain of mortal sin and later agonises over the choice of suicide in terms of its theological damnation. The conflict is particularly interesting because it is not a conflict of faith, but rather a dispute set in legalistic terms: This argument is not simply one of whether Scobie is damned to hell, a question Greene himself tired of, but rather of whether what he did was worth anything in the world of the present. In , the novel was chosen by *TIME* magazine as one of the one hundred best English-language novels from to the present. Retrieved 3 July Retrieved 21 October A Study in Greene, p.

Chapter 2 : The Heart of the Matter - Graham Greene - Google Books

The Heart Of The Matter by Graham Greene Scobie, a police officer serving in a war-time West African state, is distrusted, being scrupulously honest and immune to bribery. But then he falls in love, and in doing so is forced to betray everything he believes in, with tragic consequences.

Like Scobie, Greene approached his work as a function of conscience as well as conscientiousness, a duty as prosaic as accurate note taking and as imperative as justice. It was the prosaic sense of writerly responsibility that first drew me to *The Heart of the Matter*. I turned to this novel in search of information and insight, to get a sense of the war as it was experienced far from the major battlefields and concentration camps of Europe and Asia. But there was more. Political exigencies within the narrative become prisms for personal choice. What it does have are divisions exacerbated by war and Empire that underscore the universality of human frailty. In such a world it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish enemy from ally. For Scobie, the resulting conflict is an agony. For Greene, the resulting conflict is truth. Even the Japanese make a fleeting appearance late in the novel, as Scobie notes in his diary: And so Scobie suspends moral judgment against them all. Through this suspension Greene makes a subtle yet impassioned plea to his post-war readers. The lesson here is that a serious novel about wartime in a colonial outpost must speak to something larger than wartime in a colonial outpost. Authenticity is one thing, but meaning quite another. A great book captures time and place in a way that will pulse with significance far into the future. Moral responsibility, conscience, and compassion are invariably central to this meaning. His characters are tormented souls and sinners all, cut from his own cloth. Like Scobie, Greene converted to Catholicism in order to marry, and was then unfaithful to his wife. He was plagued by theological doubt, an obsessive sense of obligation, and a guilty conscience, all of which are mirrored in his protagonist. In a final paroxysm of despair, Scobie commits suicide to avoid taking sides between the opposing forces that are fracturing his conscience. However, what seemed incredible to them was all too real to Greene. In *Touched with Fire: Manic Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament* Free Press, , Kay Redfield Jamison writes that when Greene was an undergraduate at Oxford he aroused considerable concern among his friends by playing Russian roulette. I slipped a bullet into a chamber and holding the revolver behind my back, spun the chambers round [â€] I put the muzzle of the revolver into my right ear and pulled the trigger. There was a minute click, and looking down at the chamber I could see that the charge had moved into the firing position. I was out by one What Greene found less than credible was the notion that the two halves of any human being ever could fit neatly together. In fact, the persistent internal misfitting of the psyche was a central constant in all his work. Suffering was the attestable key to imaginative existence. Greene made it his responsibility as a writer to express this suffering, in the sense of both enacting and squeezing the truth of it onto the page. He felt similarly bound to his characters. For what Greene watched most closely was the inner life of his characters. Each external movement had to be not only seen but also decoded as an expression of human truth. For Greene, that truth inevitably was influenced by his own perspective, which in turn was influenced by his manic depression. He admitted as much in his autobiography *Ways of Escape*: Sometimes I wonder how all those who do not write, compose, or paint can manage to escape the madness, the melancholia, the panic fear which is inherent in the human situation. And that it all comes to an end. In *The Heart of the Matter* the hidden text wrestles hard with the question of personal responsibility for this suffering â€” particularly in the context of war. Ticki is alluded to. Greene thus suggests that to be alive in this world is to have responsibilities, not just to oneself or for those closest, but in relationship to the complicated truth of all humankind. If one knew, he wondered, the facts, would one have to feel pity even for the planets? If one reached what they called the heart of the matter. Submarines are patrolling the Atlantic and sinking civilian ships, and far to the north European Jews are forced to wear yellow stars pinned to their coats. No direct mention is ever made in these pages of Kristallnacht, Auschwitz, or Bergen-Belsen, and yet, even in this fictional outpost, peace is an illusion. In actual fact, those stars represent the exact opposite of security and freedom. Why set a story in a colonial outpost during a historical war unless that story contains a subtext whose meaning transcends the limitations of history?

Chapter 3 : The Heart of the Matter - Wikipedia

The Heart of The Matter, Graham Greene *The Heart of the Matter* () is a novel by English author Graham Greene. The book details a life-changing moral crisis for Henry Scobie.

Over the past fifteen years, he has built up a reputation for honesty, but he learns that, in spite of his labors, he is to be passed over for the district commissionership in favor of a younger man. Those fifteen long years now seem to him to have been too long and filled with too much work. Worse than his own disappointment is the disappointment of his wife. Scobie needs the encouragement that a rise in official position would have given her to compensate for the loss of her only child some years before and for her unpopularity among the official families of the district. A love for literature, especially poetry, sets Mrs. Scobie apart from the other officials and their wives. Once the difference was discerned, the other Britishers came to distrust and dislike her. They even pity her husband. Indeed, the Scobies are not much happier than people imagine them to be. Scobie hates her life, and her husband dislikes having to make her face it realistically; both of them drink. When she finds that her husband is not going to become district commissioner, Mrs. Scobie insists that he send her to the Cape Colony for a holiday, even though German submarines are torpedoing many vessels at the time. Scobie cannot afford the expense of a trip to the Cape Colony. Indeed, he already gave up part of his life insurance to pay for a previous such excursion. After trying unsuccessfully to borrow money from the banks, he seeks out Yusef, a Syrian merchant, who agrees to lend him the money at 4 percent interest. He even ships industrial diamonds to the Nazis. This fact poses a series of problems for the police chief. Any one of these facts would have made Scobie uneasy; all three in combination make him painfully aware that Wilson must hate him, as in fact he does. When a Portuguese liner is searched upon its arrival in port, The entire section is 1, words.

Chapter 4 : The Heart of the Matter (film) - Wikipedia

Graham Greene's "The Heart of The Matter" is a poignant, exceptionally well written book that looks into the flawed, deeply religious beliefs, of a deputy Police Commissioner in the British Police force patrolling a West African colony during World War 2.

When I came across an identical image in the first pages of the present novel, I knew I was letting myself in for another traumatic ride through the maze of a fallible human mind, I knew I would struggle with depression and moral ambivalence and with a loss of faith, yet I was also aware that the novel will hold me in its thrall until the last page, like compulsively watching the grief and destruction left behind by a trainwreck or by a suicide bombing. He felt almost intolerably lonely. On either side of the school the tin roofs sloped towards the sea, and the corrugated iron above his head clanged and clattered as a vulture alighted. A mirror image reinforces the tonality of the novel in its final pages: Between these macabre bookends, a man named Scobie will be torn apart in his love, in his integrity and in his Catholic faith, in a sweltering tropical town on the coast of Sierra Leone, during the larger world tempest that was the second world war. Both writers taped their inner demons in order to create their memorable expatriates, both explore the theme of self-destruction in the face of personal failure, yet Scobie and Firmin have almost nothing in common when it gets down to the root cause of their misfortune. If one knew, he wondered, the facts, would one have to feel pity even for the planets? My heart went out for the Consul, a victim of an excess of love and of misguided faith in his peers, a man who would rather drink himself to death than live in a world without love. For example, Scobie may claim to be forgiving, but he secretly despises the man who once did him wrong: Ever since Fellowes had snatched his house, Scobie had done his best to like the man - it was one of the rules by which he set his life, to be a good loser. Fifteen years form a face, gentleness ebbs with experience, and he was always aware of his own responsibility. He had led the way: He had formed her face. When he called her name he was crying like Canute against a tide - the tide of her melancholy and disappointment. The issue is made even clearer when Scobie sets his eyes on a young war widow rescued from a torpedoed ship in the Atlantic: Scobie is in love with his feelings of power, not with the actual person. He had no sense of responsibility towards the beautiful and the graceful and the intelligent. They could find their own way. It was the face for which nobody would go out of his way, the face that would never catch the covert look, the face which would soon be used to rebuffs and indifference that demanded his allegiance. I did feel a sort of sympathy and understanding for Scobie in the beginning of the novel, proof of the indisputable talent of Greene to capture the inner landscape of a weak man struggling to overcome his sins. I even gave him some leeway for circumstances beyond his control, like the devastating loss of his only daughter at a very young age. But, like the lapsed priest from "The Power and the Glory", Scobie goes and sins again and again instead of asking for redemption and of mending his ways. He may be honest in his prayers and in his dreams, but he is definitely a sinner in his actions. I suppose it comes of having a pious wife. When he was young, he had thought love had something to do with understanding, but with age he knew that no human being understood another. Love was the wish to understand, and presently with constant failure the wish died, and love died too perhaps or changed into this painful affection, loyalty, pity Scobie believes we are unable to truly know another person, and maybe this is one of the reasons he will fail - he is locked inside his own mind. What an absurd thing it was to expect happiness in a world so full of misery. Greene put his actual experience of living and spying in Sierra Leone during the war to good use in the novel. The tensions with the French collaborationist neighbors, with German interests in the region and with neutral Portuguese smuggling of diamonds are convincing, as are the snatches of dialogue and the whole tropical lethargy of the expatriates: This is the original Tower of Babel. Part of Greene secret of success is for me his empathy for the local population, his fascination with the less sophisticated societies that may be living closer to nature and are more honest in their likes and dislikes. Why, he wondered, swerving the car to avoid a dead pie-dog, do I love this place so much? Nobody here could ever talk about a heaven on earth. Heaven remained rigidly in its proper place on the other side of death, and on this side flourished the injustices, the cruelties, the meanness that elsewhere people so cleverly hushed up. Here

you could love human beings nearly as God loved them, knowing the worse: Some of the phrases and gestures strike me as extremely close to my own recent experiences of living as an expat in one of these countries. Others are embarrassing reminders of the ugly undercurrent of racism and imperial arrogance that brought down the English Empire and that I still catch echoes of from some of my colleagues today: What they had both thought was safety proved to have been the camouflage of an enemy who works in terms of friendship, trust and pity. Although they could touch each other it was as if the whole coastline of a continent was already between them; their words were like the stilted sentences of a bad letter writer. There are other people waiting. I know these are just fancies. But I feel - empty. The author makes his argument crystal clear in one the last one liners to be picked in the text: The Church knows all the rules. I will close my review instead with the original: Und sieh dir andre an: Und doch ist einer, welcher dieses Fallen, undendlich sanft.

Chapter 5 : The Heart of the Matter Quotes by Graham Greene

The Heart of the Matter study guide contains a biography of Graham Greene, literature essays, a complete e-text, quiz questions, major themes, characters, and a full summary and analysis. About The Heart of the Matter.

Quotes[edit] Why [Nobody here could ever talk about a heaven on earth. Heaven remained rigidly in its proper place on the other side of death, while on this side flourished the injustices, the cruelties, the meanness that elsewhere people so cleverly hushed up. Here you could love human beings nearly as God loved them, knowing the worst: Book 1, Part 1, ch. It is, one is told, the unforgivable sin, but it is a sin the corrupt or evil man never practises. He always has hope. He never reaches the freezing-point of knowing absolute failure. Only the man of goodwill carries always in his heart this capacity for damnation. In human relations kindness and lies are worth a thousand truths. Book 2, Part 1, ch. He would never rid himself of it. He knew from experience how passion died away and how love went, but pity always stayed. Nothing ever diminished pity. The conditions of life nurtured it. There was only a single person in the world who was unpitiable, oneself. Book 2, Part 3, ch. Do not desert me. Would a woman accept the love for which a child had to be sacrificed? Book 3, Part 1, ch. Why had they not left us with lust? You survive the cross every day. You can only suffer. You can never be lost. Admit that you must come second to these others. Book 3, Part 2, ch. Beauty is like success: Book 3, Part 3, ch.

Chapter 6 : The Heart of the Matter () - IMDb

English author Graham Greene's novel The Heart of the Matter is the story of Henry Scobie, a police officer in British West Africa during the World War II era. He finds himself facing a difficult period in his life defined by a moral dilemma.

Chapter 7 : The Heart of the Matter Summary - calendrierdelascience.com

The Heart of the Matter, as do many of Greene's novels, considers the questions of faith, good and evil from a Catholic point of view. Greene, a convert to Catholicism himself, imbues the character of Major Scobie with a fierce sense of justice, duty and responsibility.

Chapter 8 : The Heart of the Matter by Graham Greene

The Heart of the Matter () is one of Graham Greene's most famous novels. Critics consider it to be part of Greene's "Catholic Trilogy" alongside The Power and the Glory () and The End of the Affair (). The Heart of the Matter has remained immensely popular over the past several decades.

Chapter 9 : The Heart of the Matter by Graham Greene | LibraryThing

The Heart of the Matter by Graham Greene, like many of Greene's works, invokes both common theological problems and those rather specific to the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church. The first.