

The Magic Mountain, by Thomas Mann, trans. John E. Woods (Vintage paperback)

(**please note:** not the translation by Lowe-Porter)

Class meetings: Thursdays: February 8, March 8, April 12, May 10 | - 6:00–7:45 p.m.

Feb. 8 - Foreword and pp. 3- 216

1. Opening

a. Time as ahistorical, fairy-tale-telling time, historical time before the war, historical time after the war.

b. Shifting stance of narrator, now as a saga-telling sage, now as historically located commentator.

2. Death and decay

3. The old world of the high bourgeoisie in Hamburg (*haute bourgeoisie*) as opposed to the new bourgeoisie in decline.

4. Religion and magic (the various times the number seven appears).

5. Literary matters:

a. irony, for which Mann is famous.

b. taking the right tone, a subject that comes up frequently. One could say that Mann's goal in the novel is to find out what tone one should take toward life, toward life in general and life in the bourgeois era.

c. repetition (e.g., various deaths at the hospital). In many ways, this novel is built like a fugue - introduction of a theme and then a development of it.

Mar. 8 - pp. 216-417

1. What is the significance of the story of the two grandfathers (p. 151 ff.)?

2. How are we to assess Hans Castorp in pp. 182-86?

3. How do we assess Hans Castorp in conversation with Settembrini (195-98)?

4. Significance of Hans Castorp's getting his x-ray (213ff.)?

5. What is the significance of Hans Castorp's "intoxication" in 224ff. and 236? Why has the letter home "established his freedom" (222)?

6. How do we assess Hans Castor's conversation with Settembrini in pp. 240 - 47?

7. What does the chapter "Humaniora" do for the story?

8. What does the chapter "Research" do for the story? What is the tone of this chapter?

9. Why does Mann introduce the difference between classical irony and some other kind of irony? ("Classical irony" is the kind that Shakespeare uses in Mark Antony's funeral oration for Caesar, in which he says, several times, "and Brutus is an honorable man" meaning, "Brutus is definitely not an honorable man." That is, classical irony is saying the opposite of what the words seem mean.)

10. What might be the significance of Hans Castorp's question to Behrens, "Why retain the form?" (p. 262). See "form" on pp. 25 and 155. And, of course, manners are a matter of "form." Is doing your duty a matter of "form"?

11. What is the importance of the end of the first complete paragraph on p. 226, in which the narrator says that Hans Castorp has moved beyond infatuation to something else, which is not given a name?

April 12 - pp. 417-616

1. What is the significance of Hans Castorp's reactions to Settembrini and Naphta (examples all over the place in "City of God and Evil Deliverance" and "Operationes Spirituales")?
2. The significance of James Tienappel?
3. On the movies: "catered to that civilization's deepest wishes" (p. 311).
4. Youth's deepest desire is to obey; "what the age needs . . . is terror" (both on p. 393); "you are apparently not disturbed by the fact that money is its soul" (p. 394, after a swift recounting of theories of government as a social contract).
5. Behrens: "The limitations of science are no business of mine" (409) and "I am only a doctor, do you understand?" (411).

May 10 - pp. 616- end.

Toward the end of *The Magic Mountain*, there are three chapters on Pieter Peeperkorn. I am not sure how Mann expects us to take the crucial paragraph on p. 648 about Settembrini and Naphta, but I am even less sure how we are supposed to take this figure, what symbolic valence he has. Please note what sort of "discourses" (English professor talk) seem to cluster around this figure. For example, in Hans Castorp's ecstatic vision in the snow, I noted that the discourse of Pauline Christianity starts to cluster around Hans Castorp's thoughts. To my ear, there is also in this passage the discourse of Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night Dream* (although I am willing to be told I am hearing things,) and by allowing in echoes of Shakespeare's comedies, Mann is appealing to the sweetness and exuberance and visionary musings that often end Shakespeare's comedies. What discourses surround Herr Peeperkorn?

Note: Peeperkorn is called "primitive" (559); he is in a "primal state" (561). "He puts us in his pocket" (573). His "personality is positive, like life itself" (574); he is a "force of life" (576).

1. What might be significant in Mann's giving Peeperkorn a history as an international businessman?
2. What genre does Mann seem to step into in the expedition to the waterfall (606 ff)?
3. What is Hans Castorp's tone of voice in his conversation with Frau Chauchat (584 and following), and with Peeperkorn (590 and following)?