

One man's search for meaning in his life leads to a life changing journey of self-discovery

Beth Williams

“Under the glass portcullis of a theatre Amory stood, watching the first great drops of rain splatter down and flatten to dark stains on the sidewalk. The air became gray and opalescent; a solitary light suddenly outlined a window over the way; then another light; then a hundred more danced and glimmered into vision. Under his feet a thick, iron-studded skylight turned yellow; in the street the lamps of the taxi-cabs sent out glistening sheens along the already black pavement. The unwelcome November rain had perversely stolen the day’s last hour and pawned it with that ancient fence, the night....”

Such splendid, breathtaking descriptions--do they even exist anymore? In a world where we're in a rush for everything, we turn to books to calm our hurried souls, but today's books just don't have the same delightful description as those of generations past. Treat yourself to a taste of splendor. Devour the lovely descriptions and true-to-life characters of F. Scott Fitzgerald's masterpiece "This Side of Paradise." This is my all-time favorite, favorite, favorite Fitzgerald book. The combination of spectacular (if spectacular can even do Fitzgerald's talent an ounce of justice) description and a complex character makes "This Side of Paradise" a must read for anyone who loves a good story.

Amory Blaine is someone with whom we can all relate at one time or another in our lives. Amory is a highly intelligent Princeton man who is searching for love in life. Perhaps most importantly, though, he is searching for something to satisfy his intense desire for living life to the very fullest. He yearns to become his own man, not the man his mother molded nor the man Princeton's strict guidelines required. Amory wants to be himself, a concept that is so easy to relate to that, despite the difference in generations, Amory becomes as real as your neighbor or someone you might run into at the grocery store.

Meet Amory Blaine. He is a well-bred young boy, who traveled throughout America with his mother during his childhood before she sent him to live with relatives in Minnesota for several years. He soaks up his new lifestyle in Minnesota, slowly losing grasp of his very cultured upbringing. When he finally returns to live with his mother, he tells her he wants to go away to school. She sends him to St. Regis where he just doesn't fit in. He is too cultured, too intellectual compared to his classmates. In an effort to fit in and be one of the gang, Amory is determined to become an athlete. But Amory doesn't want to be just any athlete. He wants to be the best football player at St. Regis.

While Amory makes it through high school without any major problems, he still doesn't feel as though he fits in...until he enters Princeton. Princeton is a haven for Amory, a place where he can explore, savor political and literary discussions and discover some of the most profound books ever written. He even finds a set of close friends: Kerry, Burne and Tom. Amory's college years are peppered with love affairs, slacking off and tragedy.

Despite allowing his studies to suffer, Amory's avid thirst for reading and philosophical issues never wanes. His life is changed, however, when he heads overseas for the battlefields of WWI in his final year at Princeton. Love, loss and his return to Princeton lead him to the one thing most of us crave in life: an understanding of himself.

Amory is one of those characters who will stay with you long after you close the book. You'll wonder what became of him. Did he find the love of his life? Where did his life take him after Princeton? Pick up "This Side of Paradise" and journey to self-discovery with Amory Blaine. "This Side of Paradise" is one of the all-time best reads!