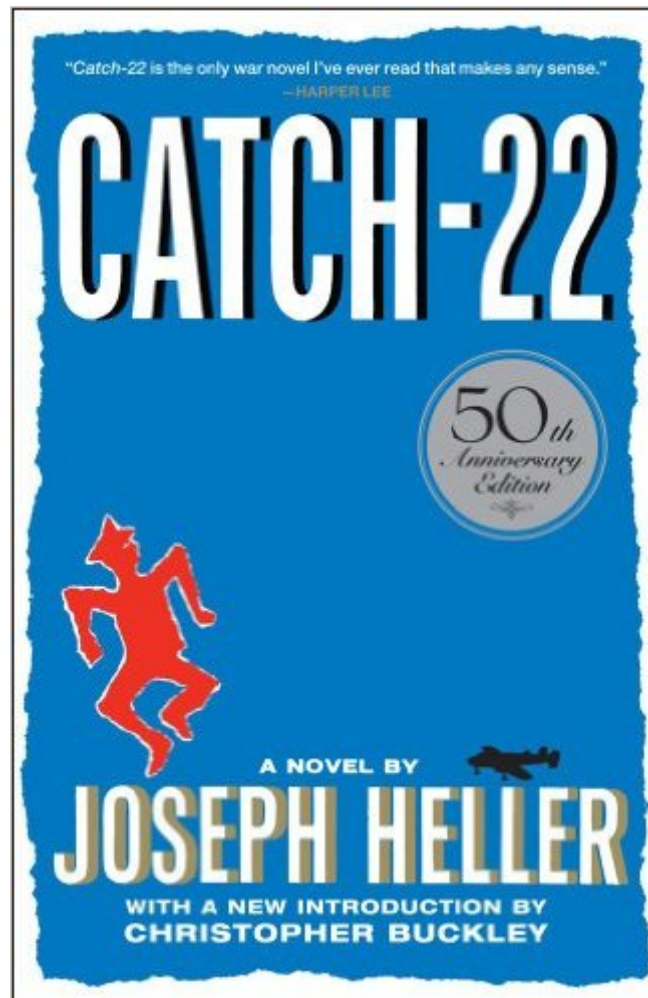


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Catch-22: 50th Anniversary Edition



Synopsis

This fiftieth-anniversary edition commemorates Joseph Heller's masterpiece with a new introduction; critical essays and reviews by Norman Mailer, Alfred Kazin, Anthony Burgess, and others; rare papers and photos; and much more. Fifty years after its original publication, *Catch-22* remains a cornerstone of American literature and one of the funniest and most celebrated books of all time. In recent years it has been named to the best novels lists by Time, Newsweek, the Modern Library, and the London Observer. Set in Italy during World War II, this is the story of the incomparable, malingering bombardier, Yossarian, a hero who is furious because thousands of people he has never met are trying to kill him. But his real problem is not the enemy—it is his own army, which keeps increasing the number of missions the men must fly to complete their service. Yet if Yossarian makes any attempt to excuse himself from the perilous missions he's assigned, he'll be in violation of *Catch-22*, a hilariously sinister bureaucratic rule: a man is considered insane if he willingly continues to fly dangerous combat missions, but if he makes a formal request to be removed from duty, he is proven sane and therefore ineligible to be relieved. This fiftieth-anniversary edition commemorates Joseph Heller's masterpiece with a new introduction by Christopher Buckley; a wealth of critical essays and reviews by Norman Mailer, Alfred Kazin, Anthony Burgess, and others; rare papers and photos from Joseph Heller's personal archive; and much more. Here, at last, is the definitive edition of a classic of world literature.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I would first like to inform other reviewers that I am a high school junior, read this as part of a choice

novel project, and had no trouble grasping the ideas that Joseph Heller presented within his *Catch-22*. The sarcastic attitude of this novel is conspicuous, and all bonds with reality are dropped with the first character introductions. The humor that has previously been criticized I found to be easy to understand, not monotonous, and a unique aspect to illustrate WW2. This is not to say the humor is for all, because Heller uses many paradoxes (look up definition of "catch-22"), simple one line contradictions, and subtle word choices to draw a laugh-all which represent the personality of the novel. Yes, there are many characters, probably over fifty, yet grasping the names is not important at all times. Of course you quickly get associated with Yossarian and the other main characters, and chapters do reintroduce people from the early parts of the book. This may be annoying, yet each character is distinct, and there is little chance of confusing Milo, the entrepreneur, with Havermeyer, the elite pilot. In truth, the novel lacks a linear time, but chooses, rather, to define the novel through numerous character sketches, focusing them loosely around Yossarian. By the later chapters of the novel, Heller subtly introduces the gruesome truths of the war, balancing the early humor with more realistic look. It is through this transition that the weight of the situation is elucidated, and by contrasting the final chapters with the first, Heller is able to attract our attention and force us to analyze the war. What is the novel about?

For so many of us growing up in the USA, our high school teachers assigned us Joseph Heller's "Catch-22" as required reading, and I was among those assignees. I'm not sure why the requirement, other than perhaps some Catch-22 type of logic that everyone else was assigning it, so there, must be great, must read. I don't particularly remember liking the novel then, perhaps with no more substantial of a reason than -- just not my style. Reading the novel now, in midlife, my opinion (or my literary style) has changed little, but today, I can attempt to add to "not my style" perhaps a few deeper insights. In this second read, I realize what so fails to appeal to me is Heller's slapstick, absurdist, repetitive and dizzyingly circular style of storytelling. At the same time, I fully realize this is also the appeal of the novel for many: it's absurdity. Indeed, time has tested Heller's topic of war having little logic or reason in the real world, mostly born of individual and governmental insanity, power plays and mere whim, male ego clashing and chest thumping. Few wars seem to have good reason for happening when one considers all the other possibilities of resolution. While leaders sit safely in secure offices on fortified hilltops, the common soldier takes all the risks, offers up his/her body for battering, endures indescribable torments in battle, and often gives the ultimate sacrifice of life. Shall we debate the virtues of boxing rings for political leaders instead? Yes, war is absurd. And Heller captures this "crazy-making" truth in a crazy-making novel in which

characters dance to illogical commands, spin in frustration, and dig themselves in ever deeper as they try harder and harder to dig themselves out. You know... as in war.

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