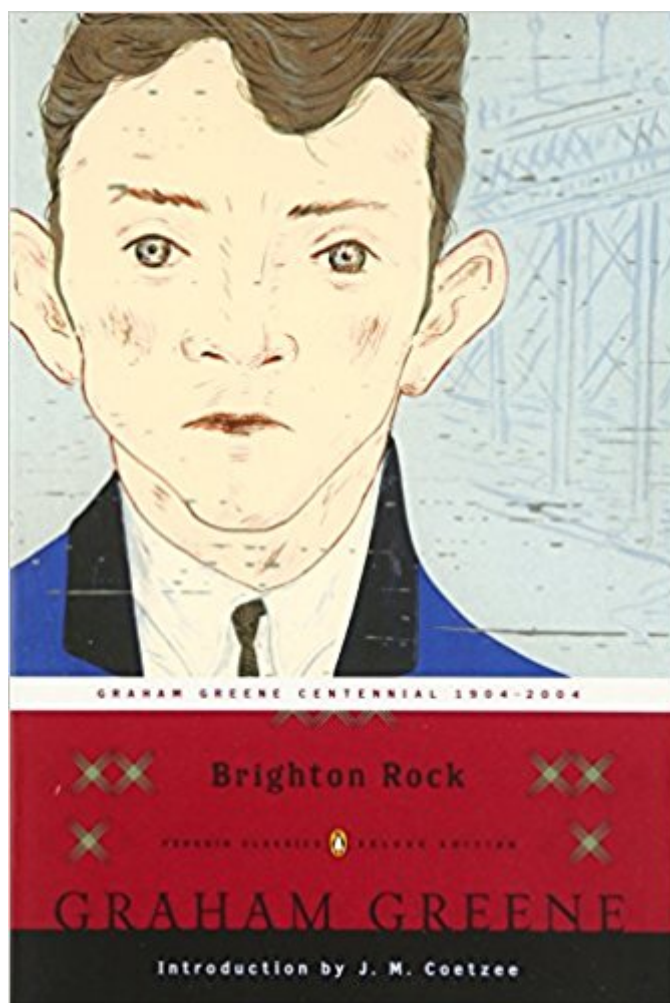


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Brighton Rock (Penguin Classics Deluxe Edition)



Synopsis

"Hale knew, before he had been in Brighton three hours, that they meant to murder him..." — Graham Greene's chilling exposé of violence and gang warfare in the pre-war underworld is a classic of its kind. — Pinkie, a teenage gangster on the rise, is devoid of compassion or human feeling, despising weakness of both the spirit and the flesh. Responsible for the razor slashes that killed mob boss Kite and also for the death of Hale, a reporter who threatened the livelihood of the mob, Pinkie is the embodiment of calculated evil. As a Catholic, however, Pinkie is convinced that his retribution does not lie in human hands. — He is therefore not prepared for Ida Arnold, Hale's avenging angel. Ida, whose allegiance is with life, the here and now, has her own ideas about the circumstances surrounding Hale's death. For the sheer joy of it, she takes up the challenge of bringing the infernal Pinkie to an earthly kind of justice. — This Penguin Classics Deluxe edition features an introduction by J. M. Coetzee. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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Customer Reviews

—“Here the probing is carried further in a brilliant and uncompromising indictment of some of the worst aspects of modern civilization, showing us the hard-boiled criminal mind not as a return to

savagery but as a horrible perversion of cerebration. •The New York Times "Why does this bleak, seething and anarchic novel still resonate? Its energy and power is that of the rebellious adolescent, foreshadowing the rise of the cult of youth in the latter part of the 20th century. •The Guardian "[Greene] believed his coldness vital for his art - 'There is,' he affirmed, 'a splinter of ice in the heart of a writer'. •John Carey

Introduction by John Carey --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Very well-written tale of complex characters with a dark side. Set in Brighton in the 1930s Ida Arnold sets out to find out what happened to Charles Hale while also trying to save Rose from the sociopath "Pinkie" who is charming her to hide from the police.

I'm still coming to terms with the ending, or last lines of this grim and gritty story. The story is set against the backdrop of Brighton in the early 1930's. The leader of a small and motley razor gang, led by the hard as nails Pinkie Brown is looking to expand his criminal empire. When he succeeds in taking out a journalist who has some shadowy connections to a rival gang, Pinkie's quest for recognition and respect begins to spiral out of control. It's the character of Pinkie who grabs you and doesn't let go. This was never going to be a pretty story, the characters are too tired and the struggle to survive is too hard. In some ways there couldn't be any doubt as to their path, journey in life. There is a lot more depth and differing levels of shading to make this more than just a psychological thriller. Rich in characterisation and atmosphere, the theme of "good versus evil", more than worth a look at.

In this early work Graham Greene created the memorable character of Pinkie, a 17 year old street tough, with big ambitions. Set in the seaside resort of Brighton, Pinkie is aspiring to be the leader of a gang involved in gambling and other illegal pursuits. The coldness with which he eliminates people who get in his way drive the story. Pinkie is one of those cold blooded individuals around whom no friend or associate is really safe. He operates on a level of evil that is appalling. An equally tough woman is drawn into the story early on by her brief association with one of Pinkie's victims. Ida has the insight to see him for what he really is even when others are deceived. When a young innocent waitress gets caught in his orbit and appears to be on the path to being his next victim Ida relentlessly tries to intervene. Greene's writing is evocative of the place and time, the plot is well

developed and the characters are memorable, particularly Pinkie. This is an earlier work than some of Greene's better known and more widely read novels and not quite as strong. Nevertheless a writer of Greene's stature is always interesting and *Brighton Rock* is a thought provoking short novel well worth reading.

Graham Green always insisted that he was a "writer who was Catholic" rather than a "Catholic writer", which he was often pigeonholed as. Regardless, he frequently incorporated Catholic themes into his writing, all the more interesting because he was not born into the religion, and so approached it with the viewpoint of a man who was converted as an adult. This is the first of the "Catholic novels" (which would later include such works as *"The Power and the Glory"*), and in many ways represents the segway from his initial crime novels into more complex literary work, since this is a sequel to the much less contemplative *"A Gun For Sale"*, though knowledge of the events of that novel are not required in the least (most people are surprised to learn that it is a sequel). The story opens with a Mr. Hale arriving in Brighton on work, with the unforgettable opening line: "Hale knew, before he had been in Brighton three hours, that they meant to murder him." Greene grabs you with that, and Hale, in the manner of Hitchcock's *"Psycho"*, is quickly disposed of. The murder of Hale by a gang of local thugs touches off the new phase of the story. Hale found only a single sympathetic ear as he tried to avoid death, one Ida Arnold, who refuses to abide by the coroner's inexplicable (indeed, unexplained) conclusion that Hale died of natural causes. Ida is a kind, good-natured but irreligious soul (though superstitious; as Greene tells us, she only believes in the Ouija board), with a rather temporal sense of right and wrong, and an impressive rack (as Green frequently mentions, oddly). She is on the trail of the gang, led by Pinky Brown, ie, the Boy, as Greene always calls him in-text, a 17-year-old sociopath who lives within a rigid Catholic morality system which he has more or less inverted, having become fascinated by damnation (being unable to picture Heaven, because of his grim circumstances). The cover-up of Hale's death is more or less complete, but for the existence of Rose, a dumb but nice sixteen-year-old waitress who shares Pinky's Catholicism, and comes to share his attitude regarding Hell, albeit filtered through a sort of dogged desire to demonstrate the depth of her devotion to Pinky. Greene's work is very much interested in how Catholicism functions in the real world (he himself was no saint; he would later leave his wife and have relations with other women, while remaining technically married, much in the manner of Spencer Tracy). We expect that those who adhere to Catholic morality will be better people, but Greene shows how this is not necessarily the case. Pinky and Rose's belief in damnation is transformed into a kind of determined attraction to it, mixed with the idea that there is

enough time to repent 'between the stirrup and the ground" (which, for all we know, there is; who can say what happens to Pinky? Greene never tells us). Ida, meanwhile, is merely superstitious and possessed of an easy, shame-free sexuality (indeed, Greene unknowingly captured what his own future situation would be). By contrast, the Boy is repulsed by the concept of intimacy, particularly in a sexual context, in another reversal of expectations, since one tends to expect a religious writer to associate free sexuality with immorality (though there are some light questions about how Ida lives, and she is, at story's end, considering whether or not she should go back to her husband (albeit consulting the Ouija on this)). Catholics, as a priest says in-story, have perhaps the greatest propensity for evil because of their closeness to God.

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