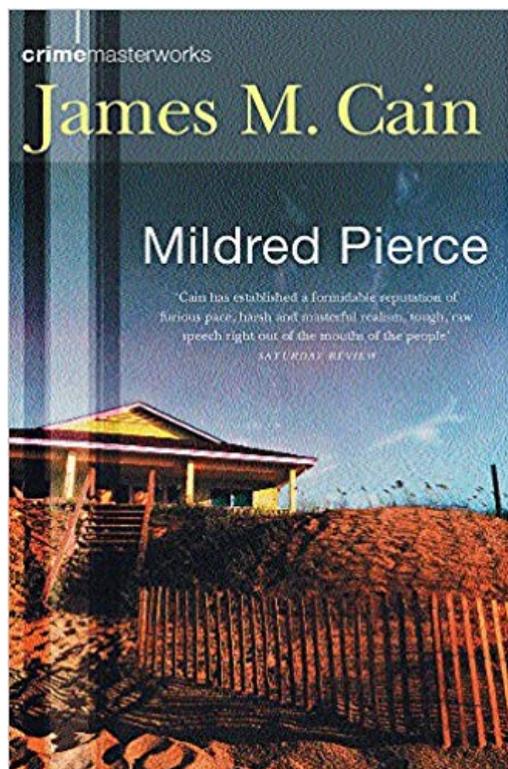


## Mildred Pierce (Crime Masterworks) by James M. Cain



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Mildred Pierce is the story of a determined and ambitious woman who, after her feckless husband abandons her, by hard work and sacrifice builds a successful business to ensure the future of her pampered and selfish daughter. But she isn't prepared for the intrigues and devastating betrayals of those closest to her. This is James M. Cain's most substantial novel and a classic of the Depression years.



## Reviews of the Mildred Pierce (Crime Masterworks) by James M. Cain

fr0mTheSkY

This is a well crafted story, great characters which you either love or hate, and with Mildred Pierce being someone whom I think most people can identify with on some level. It takes place during the Great Depression. Mildred is someone you like instantly because you see her confront her husband about sleeping with another woman, and she tells him that if he walks out that door and goes back to see her, then "don't come back." So, she does give him a chance. And he chooses to leave her and his two children. This is a strength and a weakness in Mildred you see again and again throughout the

story. She has to speak up, she has to stand up, sometimes out of vanity, sometimes out of love for her children, sometimes out of righteousness, and sometimes out of obsessiveness for things she needs.

Bert had squandered their money, and Mildred is close to being totally destitute, but she goes out to find work. Her pride is her biggest hindrance, as she gets several offers and turns them down because she can't stand to think of being a waitress or a maid, or wearing a uniform. Finally she swallows her pride and takes a waitress job, but she hides the details of her job from everyone, embarrassed by what she has stooped to. But Mildred is a fiercely determined person, and before long she has made the best of it and become the best waitress, and makes really good tips, and is savvy about customers, and entrepreneurial, so that when she sees that the restaurant customers are complaining about how lousy the pies are there, she schemes a way to start selling her own pies, and begins to really make money. This theme in the book, Mildred's incredible determination and ingenuity to get what she wants is her greatest strength. But her greatest weakness is her obsessive attraction to people with money and the upper class way of life. It's what attracted her to her husband Bert initially, and what attracts her to Monty (a lazy wealthy man who later brings her down just like Bert), and even her own daughter Veda, who has a holier-than-thou attitude toward anyone who is lower class or who gets their hands dirty.

The book really confronts a lot of issues about human strengths and weaknesses, about the attraction to upper class mentality, how it sucks people into a world that is very shallow and egocentric, while the working class which Mildred comes from are the people that rally and help her and support her. Yet, despite the genuineness of the people who help her, Mildred is so drawn toward the people like Bert and Monty and Veda, that she will throw it all away, ruin the very empire she builds through hard work, just to please people who don't even appreciate what she is giving them. Her determination to rise up and be successful, is the same determination that drives her to give everything to her daughter, who takes advantage and threatens to destroy the very things that Mildred worked so hard to create. I won't give away the ending, but this story is remarkably well crafted, with so many human strengths and weaknesses we all see or can identify with. Mildred is a great study of the human spirit and how sometimes the same traits that are our greatest strengths can also be our downfall.

Gardall

This is one of the best novels I have ever read.

It tells the story of one amazing woman who dedicated her life to making a better life for her daughters, one an adorably, loving child, and one a selfish, beastly young person whose only concern in life was her own gratification.

Blindly Mildred forgives Veda's reprehensible behavior, and refuses to believe it is anything more than her being a high strung teenager.

Mildred works herself ragged trying to make enough money for Veda to pursue her dream of becoming a classical pianist.

There are many twists and turns and each chapter holds a new surprise.

The characters are masterfully crafted with very unique and plausible nuances.

I also watched the mini series with Kate Winslet, which surprisingly followed the book to the letter. It also exceptional.

I highly recommend this book. I think this is the first time I have ever bestowed 5 stars.

Mr.Champions

I'm curious to read other reviews. I'd say nine-tenths of "Mildred Pierce" is amazing, but the ending was a real let-down. Up until then I thought it was going to be an American "Madame Bovary." But maybe I should just go back and read "Madame Bovary." For what it's worth, I had the same sensation with "Double Indemnity." "Postman" less so. Cain seems to have delved into something profound, at the same time creating page-turning tension, but then erases everything with his conclusions. Unless I'm missing something.... Also fwiw, I have not seen the Joan Crawford film... or the Kate Winslet remake for HBO.

Adaly

If you watch the movie, please do read the book. The film just skims the book. The story is a 'crime' fiction but not in the conventional sense. The crime is a crime involving the heart vs the mind. Need vs want. Fantasy vs reality. The only crime Mildred committed was to pursue unrequited love. To try to, buy it.

This story is classic depiction of dysfunctional relationships. The user /the doormat. (YOU can only be used with your own permission.) The doormat may slowly wake up to her doormat status but she resists because she is so desperate to win the cold hateful user over. She will never win. And the User will laugh all the way to the bank. The doormat justifies being a doormat and the user knows how to keep her there with her own permission. This conflict causes her to lose Bert (who loves her, but leaves.)

Veda is SO much more vile in the book. You want to spit. But then you ask yourself why are the adults allowing her to talk to them the way she does? AH. Veda. She is as one character says: a snake. and her mother is a doormat.

Mildred is bitten but keeps coming back for more. I thought the book ended well .. not rushed at all as one commentator suggested. It begs for a sequel. Would Mildred melt once again, if Veda came back? heh!

If you feel as though at times YOU are a doormat and want to stop being one, this is a good book for you. If you're a 'Veda' type you'll find it ... to say the least, amusing.

(Veda was well just Veda. A parent of such a child would have to learn to simply let her be; keep your distance , and your wallet closed.)

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