

Book Review

Stoner by John Williams

Stoner is enjoying a revival because of its re-publication in the *Classics* series of *The New York Review of Books*. Other publication houses have followed due to the quality of this book that was mainly overlooked in 1968. This gem of literature is worthwhile for those who enjoy social or psychological realism, or want to experience well-crafted modern prose. The protagonist, William Stoner is a literature-loving academic who, though misunderstood by his nearest and dearest, finds he has a gift for teaching. It is a fictional biography, and Stoner's life is described from his birth, to his death, which is told with evocative tenderness.

The beauty of this book is how concisely it shows emotion, setting, historical events, relationships, and workplace politics all from the point of view of this humble, hardworking man. The characterisations of his parents, in-laws, friends, wife, daughter, lover and nemesis are all special. As a reader, I saw the good and the bad of these unique folk, who can be visualised long after the book is closed.

"Part of Stoner's greatness is that it sees life whole and as it is, without delusion and without despair...", wrote Tim Kreider in his review of *Stoner* for *The New Yorker*. *Time* magazine quoted actor Tom Hanks on *Stoner*: It's simply a novel about a guy who goes to college and becomes a teacher. But it's one of the most fascinating things that you've ever come across."

I hope you find the fascination in this masterfully written book.

Paperback. 304 pages. *The New York Review of Books Classics* (2006).

