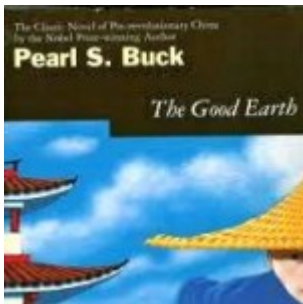


'The Good Earth' captivates decades after first published

By Kathryn Reed

Reviewing a Pulitzer Prize-winning piece of literature written by a Nobel Prize-winning author seems a bit unnecessary, but here goes.



"The Good Earth" by Pearl S. Buck has stood the test of time. The novel was first published in 1931. It won the Pulitzer. In 1937, it was made into a motion picture for which Luise Rainer won an Academy Award for best actress.

For whatever reason, it wasn't until this fall that I read the book for the first time. Fiction is not often what I'm pulled toward reading. But it doesn't read like fiction.

This classic delves into the life of a farmer in China in the early 20th century. Buck is able to easily bring her characters to life because she spent most of the first 40 years of her life in China even though she was born in the United States in 1892.

It's one of those books you don't want to put down because the characters become friends of sorts. And they are so believable. It's not that you like each one all the time. Some are never likeable.

Set in a part of the world that is foreign to me and during a time long before I was born, the circumstances the women endure because of the men are beyond my imagination. And, yet, how the story is told and unfolds, makes all seem natural for that place and time.

The story is that of a farmer – Wang Lung – and his dutiful wife O-lan. But it's much more than a couple on a farm. The depth Buck goes to describe the land, the conditions and the nuances of the culture make the subject matter compelling.

Hard work, ambition, family struggles, poor v. rich, men v. women, educated v. non-educated, love, romance, thievery, famine – it's all in the 379-page paperback.