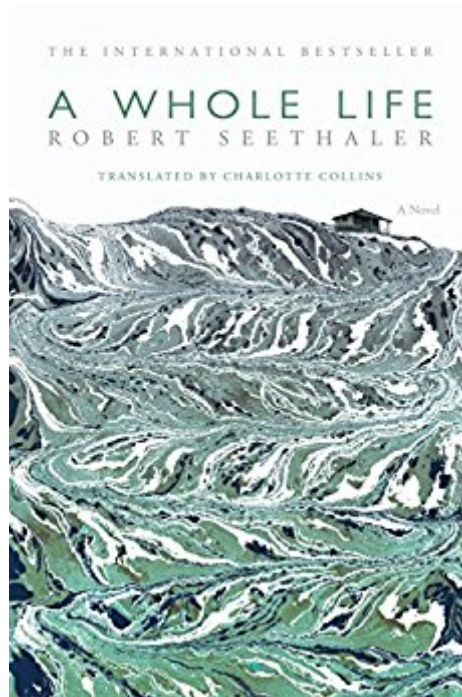


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# A Whole Life: A Novel



## Synopsis

An international bestseller Andreas Egger knows every path and peak of his mountain valley, the source of his sustenance, his livelihood--his home. Set in the mid-twentieth century and told with beauty and tenderness, Robert Seethaler's *A Whole Life* is a story of man's relationship with an ancient landscape, of the value of solitude, of the arrival of the modern world, and above all, of the moments, great and small, that make us who we are.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Yes it is OK. As the title says. it is an overview of the whole life of one man who we would say now was an abused child - though that level of abuse of children was sort of the norm in rural and other areas of the world back at the beginning of the 20th century. This man attains a dignity of self despite poverty and limited aspirations. For the most part the novel is gritty and real. Unfortunately at some part the story gets soppy and romantic which let down the tone of the hard ness of the whole life of this man.

A good read. Some people really live simple, hard, but happy lives with very little but the bare necessities to get by on. The story in this book is an excellent one of a good but hard life with major

tragedy and obstacles tolerated, borne without complaint and overcome. A reminder that we should sometimes be more grateful and appreciative for the good things we have in life. One of the better books I have read.

A deceptively simple tale of a simple man living a simple rural life that somehow over the course of just 150 pages manages to get under your skin and take you on an emotional rollercoaster through his life. The power of this story is the strong character at its heart - the taciturn Andreas Egger, orphaned at a young age, taken in for purely monetary reasons by an abusive uncle and set to work on his farm, he somehow develops into a well-balanced and loving husband to his wife Marie, proposing to her in an amazingly romantic way that should move the stoniest of hearts. I don't want to spoil the story for anyone else, as it takes you from life affirming joys to heart breaking lows, staying with you long beyond the final page. All I can say is just read it. Revel in its deceptively simple narrative as it pummels your emotions, and fall in love with the characters. For a short read it's remarkably moving. A beautiful book.

This book has been smoothly translated into English from the German by Charlotte Collins. It was longlisted for the Booker Prize. It is a simply, yet powerfully, rendered story of the whole life of Andreas Egger. He's a man of few words, but also, we learn, deeply complex. What he understands best is working. In 1902, at about age four, he arrives in the mountain village where he will spend his life. His relative is a stern, abusive farmer who accepts him from a scandalous sister-in-law for a few bank notes. He beats Andreas for the slightest offense, like spilling milk, and works him hard. But Andreas grows to have enormous strength. At age 18, faced with another brutal punishment, this time for dropping a bowl of soup, he says, "If you hit me, I'll kill you." From then on he is on his own. His good heart and integrity cause other workers take to him. At one point they help him overcome his shyness and make a spellbinding marriage proposal to a woman who works as hard as he does. The mountains surround the reader, and impending avalanches have power. "It was no more than an intimation, a soft whisper stealing around the walls . . . Black clouds were racing across the night sky, a pale, shapeless moon flickering between them." He survives tragedy, and a prisoner of war camp. As age catches up with him, he becomes a trail guide for tourists, and sees his vivid landscape through their eyes. On a whim, he takes a bus trip out of his village. Where to? "I don't know . . . I simply don't know." Eventually, he can hardly wait to return. This is the story of a man's whole life, without fireworks or a Wellington-sized effect on history. A man worth knowing, who gets back up and adapts when life throws him down. Somehow, the story's simplicity

becomes profound, his mountain village haunting, and his acquired wisdom inspiring. This is a beautiful book, one I'll be giving to others

This is a beautiful book, not for what it says, but for what it tells. The prose didn't hit me, the main character did. Again, not for what he says or thinks, but for his silence and resilience. In our time of constant (psycho)babble and analyses of every emotion it's a relief to read about a man who just gets on with life. He doesn't have many other choices. That that isn't always a bad thing I found beautifully illustrated by the following quote: "One clear autumn, when a roll of sandpaper slipped out of his hand and sprang down the slope like an impetuous young goat before eventually siling out over a spur of rock and vanishing in the depths, Egger paused for the first time in years (after his wives death) and contemplated his surroundings. The sun was low, and even the distant mountaintops stood out so clearly that it was as if someone had just finished painting them onto the sky." Years and years he saw nothing, he worked, ate and slept and worked a lot more and then he sees something again for the first time in years. The strength of a small life is once more put brilliantly when the author describes what happens when Andreas Egger sees Grace Kelly on the small screen. He is overwhelmed with so much beauty, it confuses him. He never watches television again. The sturdiness, the quietness and the resilience of Andreas Egger stayed with me. I've never met a person like him. Well you can't find a man like that in the city that's for sure. How we city people miss out.

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