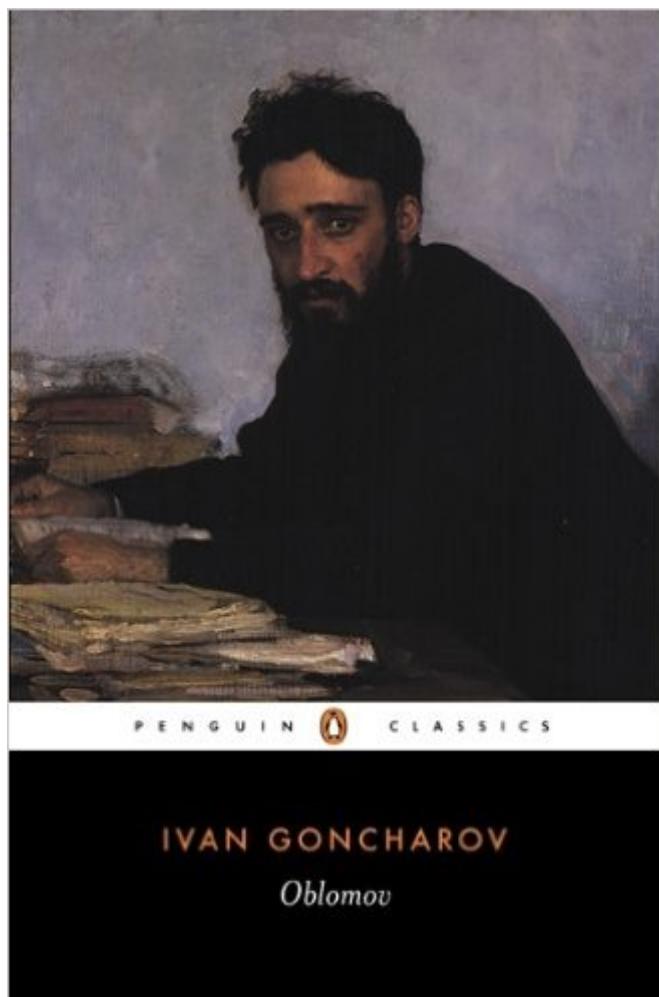


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Oblomov (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

Written with sympathetic humor and compassion, this masterful portrait of upper-class decline made Ivan Goncharov famous throughout Russia on its publication in 1859. Ilya Ilyich Oblomov is a member of Russia's dying aristocracy "a man so lazy that he has given up his job in the Civil Service, neglected his books, insulted his friends, and found himself in debt. Too apathetic to do anything about his problems, he lives in a grubby, crumbling apartment, waited on by Zakhar, his equally idle servant. Terrified by the activity necessary to participate in the real world, Oblomov manages to avoid work, postpones change, and "finally" risks losing the love of his life. This superb translation by David Magarshack captures all the subtle comedy and near-tragedy of the original.

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Customer Reviews

Oblomov was written just a couple of years before the abolition of serfdom in Russia, a time when the landowners were still clinging to feudal ways of making money but had been exposed to (and for the most part fascinated by) more modern ways of living their upper-class lives. The title character, like many other landowners, has for some time lived in Petersburg, away from his family estate, but

unlike many others he finds himself very bored with society life. Instead, he prefers to remain in his bed, entertaining a handful of guests, mulling over but never putting to paper a plan to improve his estate, and, for him most pleasantly of all, daydreaming about his simple and idyllic childhood in the country. To any outside observer, he is pathetic in this state, where he can't even finish writing a letter, so his childhood friend Stoltz tries to bring him out of his torpor. Stoltz fails in persuading him that going to dinner parties and taking part in high-society backstabbing is any better than lying in bed, but he does manage to rouse him to some kind of action by introducing him to his friend Olga. Olga and Oblomov fall in love, with Olga dreaming of a permanently-changed Oblomov and Oblomov dreaming of a future growing old with Olga on Oblomov's family estate. Meanwhile, circumstances force Oblomov to move into a new apartment, where the landlady takes quite a liking to him but the landlady's brother, along with one of Oblomov's longtime houseguests, conspire to defraud Oblomov. This probably only summarizes about half of the novel, but saying much more would probably give away too much of the ending. Despite the unattractiveness of Oblomov's preferred lifestyle, Goncharov manages to make Oblomov a very lovable character.

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