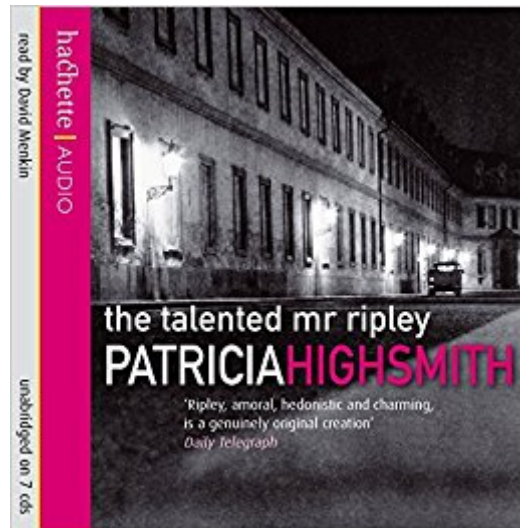


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# The Talented Mr. Ripley (Audio CD)



## Synopsis

"Tom Ripley is one of the most interesting characters in world literature." —Anthony Minghella, director of the 1999 film *The Talented Mr. Ripley* Since his debut in 1955, Tom Ripley has evolved into the ultimate bad boy sociopath. Here, in this first Ripley novel, we are introduced to suave Tom Ripley, a young striver, newly arrived in the heady world of Manhattan. A product of a broken home, branded a "sissy" by his dismissive Aunt Dottie, Ripley meets a wealthy industrialist who hires him to bring his playboy son, Dickie Greenleaf, back from gallivanting in Italy. Soon Ripley's fascination with Dickie's debonair lifestyle turns obsessive as he finds himself enraged by Dickie's ambivalent affections for Marge, a charming American dilettante. A dark reworking of Henry James's *The Ambassadors*, *The Talented Mr. Ripley* serves as an unforgettable introduction to this smooth confidence man, whose talent for murder and self-invention is chronicled in four subsequent Ripley novels. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

## Book Information

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[Authors, A-Z > \( H \) > Highsmith, Patricia](#) #51381 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > Classics](#)

## Customer Reviews

One of the great crime novels of the 20th century, Patricia Highsmith's *The Talented Mr. Ripley* is a blend of the narrative subtlety of Henry James and the self-reflexive irony of Vladimir Nabokov. Like the best modernist fiction, *Ripley* works on two levels. First, it is the story of a young man, Tom Ripley, whose nihilistic tendencies lead him on a deadly passage across Europe. On another level, the novel is a commentary on fictionmaking and techniques of narrative persuasion. Like Humbert Humbert, Tom Ripley seduces readers into empathizing with him even as his actions defy all moral standards. The novel begins with a play on James's *The Ambassadors*. Tom Ripley is chosen by the wealthy Herbert Greenleaf to retrieve Greenleaf's son, Dickie, from his overlong sojourn in Italy.

Dickie, it seems, is held captive both by the Mediterranean climate and the attractions of his female companion, but Mr. Greenleaf needs him back in New York to help with the family business. With an allowance and a new purpose, Tom leaves behind his dismal city apartment to begin his career as a return escort. But Tom, too, is captivated by Italy. He is also taken with the life and looks of Dickie Greenleaf. He insinuates himself into Dickie's world and soon finds that his passion for a lifestyle of wealth and sophistication transcends moral compunction. Tom will become Dickie Greenleaf--at all costs. Unlike many modernist experiments, *The Talented Mr. Ripley* is eminently readable and is driven by a gripping chase narrative that chronicles each of Tom's calculated maneuvers of self-preservation. Highsmith was in peak form with this novel, and her ability to enter the mind of a sociopath and view the world through his disturbingly amoral eyes is a model that has spawned such latter-day serial killers as Hannibal Lecter. --Patrick O'Kelley --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

• The brilliance of Highsmith's conception of Tom Ripley was her ability to keep the heroic and demonic American dreamer in balance in the same protagonist • thus keeping us on his side well after his behavior becomes far more sociopathic than that of a con man like Gatsby. • - Frank Rich, *New York Times Magazine* • [Highsmith] has created a world of her own • a world claustrophobic and irrational which we enter each time with a sense of personal danger. • - Graham Greene • Mesmerizing... a Ripley novel is not to be safely recommended to the weak-minded or impressionable. • - *Washington Post Book World* • The most sinister and strangely alluring quintet the crime-fiction genre has ever produced. • - Mark Harris, *Entertainment Weekly* • Highsmith's subversive touch is in making the reader complicit with Ripley's cold logic. • - *Daily Telegraph (UK)* • [Highsmith] forces us to re-evaluate the lines between reason and madness, normal and abnormal, while goading us into sharing her treacherous hero's point of view. • - Michiko Kakutani, *New York Times* • [Tom Ripley] is as appalling a protagonist as any mystery writer has ever created. • - *Newsday* • Savage in the way of Rabelais or Swift. • - Joyce Carol Oates, *New York Review of Books* • For eliciting the menace that lurks in familiar surroundings, there's no one like Patricia Highsmith. • - *Time* • Murder, in Patricia Highsmith's hands, is made to occur almost as casually as the bumping of a fender or a bout of food poisoning. This downplaying of the dramatic... has been much praised, as has the ordinariness of the details with which she depicts the daily lives and mental processes of her psychopaths. Both undoubtedly contribute to the domestication of crime in her fiction, thereby implicating the reader further in the sordid fantasy that is being worked out. • - Robert Towers, *New York Review of Books* --This text

refers to the Paperback edition.

I doubt that I will ever like another antihero as much as Tom Ripley. Maybe Dorian Gray? Almost. Tom Ripley is sent to Europe by Mr. Greenleaf to bring his son, "Dickie", back to the United States. Tom is a nobody who is bedazzled by Dickie's rich and bohemian lifestyle once he meets him in Southern Italy. Tom becomes Dickie's friend, and everything seems fine until Tom decides he wants to be more than his friend. As in the "Picture of Dorian Gray", you will not learn life lessons or come out as a better person from reading "The Talented Mr. Ripley", and that is why I like him: he is a real character, like there are so many among us, who also deserves to be the star of books. Why is he one of my favorite characters in literature? I can't make up my mind whether I like men or women, he jokes, so I'm thinking of giving them both up. They were not friends. They didn't know each other. It struck Tom like a horrible truth, true for all time, true for the people he had known in the past and for those he would know in the future: each had stood and would stand before him, and he would know time and time again that he would never know them, and the worst was that there would always be the illusion, for a time, that he did know them, and that he and they were completely in harmony and alike. For an instant the wordless shock of his realization seemed more than he could bear. "He loved possessions, not masses of them, but a select few that he did not part with. They gave a man self-respect. Not ostentation but quality, and the love that cherished the quality. Possessions reminded him that he existed, and made him enjoy his existence. It was as simple as that. And wasn't that worth something? He existed. Not many people in the world knew how to, even if they had the money. It really didn't take money, masses of money, it took a certain security." He remembered that right after that, he had stolen a loaf of bread from a delicatessen counter and had taken it home and devoured it, feeling that the world owed a loaf of bread to him, and more. If you wanted to be cheerful, or melancholic, or wistful, or thoughtful, or courteous, you simply had to act those things with every gesture. In addition to this wonderful character, Patricia Highsmith's skills as a writer are to be highlighted. Tom's joy about the anticipation of having his dreams come true and his apprehension about the possibility of such dreams being shattered are a delight to read. I could not help siding with him the entire time, despite the fact that he is anything but a role model. I do have an issue with the credibility of the plot at times. Perhaps, the gullibility of the characters in this novel reflects that of people's at a certain place and time - rich Americans and the Italian police of 1955 Italy - but sometimes the plot surpasses the line of reality and reason. In addition, I wish that Dickie and Marge had been

developed a bit more in depth, considering the important role they play in justifying some of Tom's actions, because Tom's attitude towards them can seem gratuitous. Despite these minor flaws, this is one of my favorite novels by the talented Ms. Highsmith, who is also one of my favorite writers.

This is a pretty enjoyable book. I decided to read after rewatching the 1999 movie recently when it was on HBO. I haven't read anything by Patricia Highsmith before, so I don't know if this is overall typical of her style but it is kind of an eccentric read - like reading a murder mystery totally from the POV of the criminal who is completely honest and unrepentant to the reader. It was a bit drier than the movie in tone and the other characters are much less fleshed out and only exist through Ripley's perspective on them. I don't want to give too many spoilers for those unfamiliar with the book and movie, but Tom Ripley is a very odd character and it is his POV throughout the story. At times sharply observant and other times careless, sometimes conscientious but other times coldly homicidal, Tom Ripley the con man both charms and creeps people out throughout the novel. The writing is deceptively simple and tells the story with a quickness in pace and clarity that is admirable. The novel moved quickly and kept me interested throughout, even though I knew a lot of what would happen based on the movie. I am not sure I would have liked it so much if I hadn't watched the movie first though, as part of the fun was comparing the differences between the two. I have a lot of thoughts on Tom's sexuality (or lack thereof?) and how it was portrayed in the book vs movie and how differently that might happen today if the book was written again, but that is too complicated and time-requiring for an book review.

After seeing the excellent film adaption, I was curious to read the book. I found it very stylish, and a great insight into Ripley's motivations, which you didn't get in the film. The European locations added to the atmosphere, especially having it set decades ago, when European travel was all the rage for the jet-set. Although the film adaption was different from this book, especially during the end, it was a great read and I can't wait to get the further books by Highsmith featuring her murderously delightful anti-hero.

I've just finished reading Patricia Highsmith's THE TALENTED MR. RIPLEY and must say that I loved it! Even though I already saw the film *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, I couldn't put the book down. From the first page and introduction to the main character, Tom Ripley, Highsmith hooks the reader describing Ripley as he runs from someone following him. You wonder why is he running and what is he hiding? Why is he so paranoid? What has he done? And this is just the first page before

anything criminal has happened. If you haven't seen the film or know anything about the book, THE TALENTED MR. RIPLEY is about a young man who ends up killing and assuming the identity of another young man, he was sent to bring home. That's in a nutshell. But the book and movie are so much more than just that. Is Tom Ripley a psychopath/sociopath? Is he a cold-blooded killer? Is he gay/bi and just hiding and therefore driven to kill? Or does he stop at nothing to get what he wants? Could it all be just the character being at the wrong place, at the wrong time? All these questions are not easy to answer and that's the beauty that lies in the story and characterization of Tom Ripley. Patricia Highsmith created a multi-faceted character that's not only a killer and swindler, but also one that readers sympathize with and relate to. You almost feel sorry for Ripley and see why he is driven to commit these crimes. The tension is exquisite as he plays a cat-and-mouse game with police and you are constantly holding your breath wondering if he'll get away. The exotic locales like Rome and Paris are a nice get away for readers and even though the story takes place in the 50s, it doesn't feel dated at all. Even if you've seen the various movies based on THE TALENTED MR. RIPLEY, I'd still recommend reading the book. It's a fun read that will keep you at the edge of your seat!

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