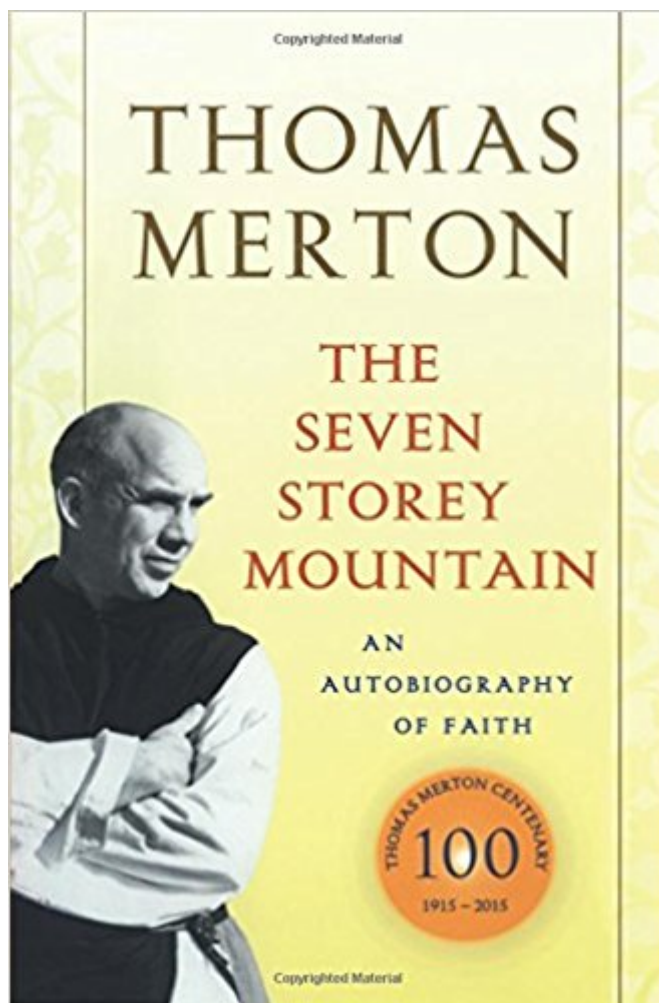


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# The Seven Storey Mountain



## Synopsis

A modern-day Confessions of Saint Augustine, *The Seven Storey Mountain* is one of the most influential religious works of the twentieth century. This edition contains an introduction by Merton's editor, Robert Giroux, and a note to the reader by biographer William H. Shannon. It tells of the growing restlessness of a brilliant and passionate young man whose search for peace and faith leads him, at the age of twenty-six, to take vows in one of the most demanding Catholic orders--the Trappist monks. At the Abbey of Gethsemani, "the four walls of my new freedom," Thomas Merton struggles to withdraw from the world, but only after he has fully immersed himself in it. *The Seven Storey Mountain* has been a favorite of readers ranging from Graham Greene to Claire Booth Luce, Eldridge Cleaver, and Frank McCourt. Since its original publication this timeless spiritual tome has been published in over twenty languages and has touched millions of lives.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In 1941, a brilliant, good-looking young man decided to give up a promising literary career in New York to enter a monastery in Kentucky, from where he proceeded to become one of the most influential writers of this century. Talk about losing your life in order to find it. Thomas Merton's first book, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, describes his early doubts, his conversion to a Catholic faith of extreme certainty, and his decision to take life vows as a Trappist. Although his conversionary piety sometimes falls into sticky-sweet abstractions, Merton's autobiographical reflections are mostly

wise, humble, and concrete. The best reason to read *The Seven Storey Mountain*, however, may be the one Merton provided in his introduction to its Japanese translation: "I seek to speak to you, in some way, as your own self. Who can tell what this may mean? I myself do not know, but if you listen, things will be said that are perhaps not written in this book. And this will be due not to me but to the One who lives and speaks in both." --Michael Joseph Gross

Harcourt is pulling out all the stops for this 50th-anniversary edition of Merton's spiritual masterpiece. In addition to the full text, this enhanced version includes an introduction by Merton's editor, Robert Giroux, and a reader's note by biographer and Thomas Merton Society founder Fr. William Shannon. The book comes with a cloth binding and a ribbon marker. Merton's faithful fans will be in seventh heaven over this glorious edition. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

A Review by Anthony T. Riggio of the book *The Seven Story Mountain* by Thomas Merton; 1/14/15  
I finally read this book after years of my wife Micheline telling me that this was such a wonderful book and well written by Thomas Merton, a Cistercian Monk, i.e., a cloistered monk who dedicates his life to silence and the devotion to God in all labors at the monastery. After reading *My Life with the Saints* by James Martin, SJ, he listed Thomas Merton as one of those saints (though not canonized) and his review sparked my interests de novo. I purchased the Kindle edition and read it. One of the reviews was quite negative about typographical errors and I did take the time to report the typos to Kindle and I certainly hope they have corrected them as promised. Thomas Merton led a most interesting life being born in France at the foot hills of the Pyrenees Mountains in 1915 to Bohemian parents, both artists but adhering to no religion. They had two sons Thomas and John Paul. The father, an impressionistic artist was a bit of a vagabond and they moved often. Merton's mother dies soon after the birth of John Paul, the father moves to England and changes schools from the French version to the English system. These moves had a very big impact on both sons but Thomas, who is quite intelligent benefits from the hurdles of learning both a new culture and a new language. Soon the Father moves his boys to live with his parents in Douglaston New York where both must start over living with the grandparents. After a couple of years of the father travelling and painting in Europe, he returns to the United States and takes only Thomas back with him to France where Thomas continues his secondary education in both France and England. He then enters Oxford for his college education, and begins his search for his life goals and discernment as to his spiritual goals. Under the British system of education he takes courses in both Greek and Latin and a healthy regiment of philosophy and eventually obtains

his BA and commences a course of study towards his MA. During this period, his father dies and he is on his own and travels a great deal in Europe during his studies. For a reason not specifically outlined in his auto biography of the Seven Storey Mountain, Thomas Merton is caused to leave Oxford; it is suggested he return to New York to complete his studies. Upon returning to New York in the mid 30s, he enrolls at Columbia University to complete his MA and his PhD. While at Columbia, Merton goes through a complex discernment process to determine his relationship with God and eventually becomes a Catholic. He is both intelligent and a pursuer of the deep issues of life and his readings, which he started as a very young man are both challenging and certainly not the usual fare, even then, for a young scholar. They are varied and full of searching themes, evolving from the philosophical the lives of the Saints, including Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. It is important to note, that Merton, though living an unusual and self-filled and directional life, albeit poor finds himself almost frantically searching for his vocation which he believes is a complete devotion to God as a priest or as a contemplative monk. He eventually goes to the Gethsemane Cistercian Monastery where he lives out his life. He presents a warm and loving picture of his life as a cloistered and contemplative life and dies while on a mission in 1968 of an unexpected accident in Thailand. I loved this book and found it an easy read, even when Merton writes about his deep love of God, which reflect his lifelong study of philosophy and spirituality. While I personally would never consider the cloistered and silent life, I could easily understand Merton's fulfillment there and how each experience in his own life led him to the monastery. I gave this book five stars out of five and highly recommend it to anyone searching for spirituality and God.

I bought this book several years ago after hearing that it was like a modern version of St. Augustine's "Confessions". However, intimidated by the book's nearly 500pg length, I never got down to reading it until recently. The Seven Storey Mountain is not exactly a page turner. Thomas Merton writes very elegantly, and at times very profoundly. This is not a book that could be breezed through as I found that I could not read very much before feeling the need to stop and ruminate over what I had read. I found the first half of the book - which was about his pre-conversion childhood and adolescent life - rather hard to get through due to the sheer amount of detail with which Merton paints his life story. But I felt that I was well rewarded later for ploughing through, even if a tad more slowly, for the pace of the story-telling picks up considerably in the second half of the book. Thomas Merton's unlikely and radical transformation from intellectual hedonist to Trappist monk is told here by himself with literary flair and profound intellectual and spiritual depth, with an unmistakable and unabashed appreciation of his Catholic faith. The Seven Storey Mountain, like St. Augustine's

Confessions, portrays the Story which has been told in countless different ways - that of the supernatural transformational power of God's grace on a sinner's life. It is, ultimately, a new telling of what Augustine called the greatest romance, the greatest adventure, and the greatest achievement - "To fall in love with God is the greatest romance; to seek him the greatest adventure; to find him, the greatest human achievement." - Augustine of HippoA contemporary spiritual classic well worth reading!

A privileged middle class, introspective and intelligent, young man searches for his personal identity. His family is rooted in southern France, his grandparents in NY. With an affinity for languages, time and inherited money to travel and lead a bohemian life style, he thrashes about looking for his identity. Sent to private Catholic schools, he at first struggles against the Universal Church, only to succumb as a Trappist monk in Kentucky. He achieves a PHD, avoids the WWII draft because of missing teeth and entry into the monastery. Interesting exposure to vocabulary. He expresses relief from the struggle of trying to find purpose and meaning in life when he at last surrenders to the Catholic life. I bought this book after Pope Frances spoke about Merton as being a persona inspiration, read 10-30 pages a night until I finished it. I struggled with religion as a teenager and empathized with Merton as a youth. I found peace when I rationalized my atheism.

It's one man's journey through a confused life. It seems the author wasted a lot of time writing about his boring life. There is no excitement. I kept waiting page after page hoping it gets better, but nothing came along. Not my cup of tea.

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