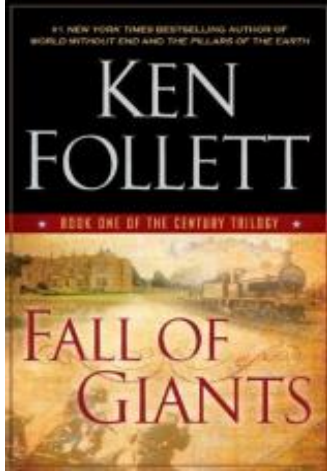


# Fall of Giants: Book One of the Century Trilogy

by Ken Follett

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## About the Book

Ken Follett's magnificent new historical epic begins, as five interrelated families move through the momentous dramas of the First World War, the Russian Revolution, and the struggle for women's suffrage.

A thirteen-year-old Welsh boy enters a man's world in the mining pits. An American law student rejected in love finds a surprising new career in Woodrow Wilson's White House. A housekeeper for the aristocratic Fitzherberts takes a fateful step above her station, while Lady Maud Fitzherbert herself crosses deep into forbidden territory when she falls in love with a German spy. And two orphaned Russian brothers embark on radically different paths when their plan to emigrate to America falls afoul of war, conscription, and revolution.

From the dirt and danger of a coal mine to the glittering chandeliers of a palace, from the corridors of power to the bedrooms of the mighty, *Fall of Giants* takes us into the inextricably entangled fates of five families—and into a century that we thought we knew, but that now will never seem the same again.

## Discussion Guide

1. Before reading **Fall of Giants**, what did you know about World War I? Did you learn anything new upon finishing the novel?
2. Is there a custom or practice from the book's early 20th-century time period that you wish existed in our modern day? What would it be, and why do you think it should have a place in today's world?
3. Is it significant that **Fall of Giants** begins with the stories of Billy and Ethel Williams? Would the novel have been different if other characters' stories opened the book, such as those of Grigori and Lev Peshkov, or Gus Dewar?

4. Talk about the historical figures that appear throughout **Fall of Giants**, such as Woodrow Wilson, King George V, Vladimir Lenin, and others. What did you think of Ken Follett's depiction of them? Do you like seeing notable people such as these come alive in fiction, or do you prefer reading about them in a strictly historical context?
5. When you first read about Billy Williams in chapter one, did you anticipate how his life would unfurl --- for example, that he would end up in running for Parliament? What about other characters: Could you guess what some of them would end up doing or being at the book's end?
6. Do you enjoy reading epic novels such as this one? What makes them so appealing to readers, in your opinion?
7. In continuation of the above question, if you had to identify one of the main characters' stories as one that would make a good 'stand-alone' novel, which would it be? Why do you think his/her story would make an enjoyable book on its own?
8. Think about the main characters and what place faith held in their lives. Did religion help or hinder their respective circumstances? What is the overall role of religion in *Fall of Giants*?
9. Along these lines, discuss the characters who abandoned their respective faiths. What caused them to walk away from their beliefs? To what end?
10. Follett depicts life in the early twentieth century through a series of detailed and imagery-rich scenes: the pitch-darkness of a Welsh coal mine, the opulence of an English country manor, the austerity of pre-industrial Russia, the horrors of a French battlefield. Which scenes stood out for you? Why did they make such an impression?
11. Follett writes from the vantage points of people whose home countries come to the brink of --- and finally enter into --- a world war. What was it like to read the perspectives of enemies as they embark on battle with one another? Did you find yourself taking sides in any way? Did reading about World War I through fiction cause you to think differently about the conflict?
12. Follett populates this novel with several strong female characters. Compare/contrast some of them; who was your favorite? Which one did you like least? Apply the same question to the book's male figures. When considering those of different backgrounds and social classes, were any of the male figures similar to one another?
13. Discuss Maud and Ethel's relationship. Did you expect them to form such a lasting bond, considering they met as mistress and servant? What did you think of the circumstances surrounding how their friendship ultimately dissolved?
14. Also contemplate Ethel and Maud's work as women's rights advocates. Were there aspects of each woman's personal life that seemed at odds with her commitment to advancing the cause of women?
15. Go back to the Aberowen mine explosion in chapter two. Do you think it's a metaphor for any of the novel's themes? How do things change in Aberowen, and elsewhere, after this disaster?
16. Discuss examples of the disparity between how women and men were treated during this era. Were women regarded better, or worse, than you imagined they'd be? How far have women come since the early 1900s? What inequalities

between the sexes still persist today?

**17.** Think about the ways the main characters' lives intersected throughout the book. Were there any characters that didn't meet over the entirety of the novel that you wished did? Who, and why?

**18.** What did you think of Earl Fitzherbert at the beginning of **Fall of Giants**? How did he evolve as a man throughout the course of the narrative? Did your opinion of Fitz change from your initial impression of him?

**19.** Consider the book's title. Who or what are the 'giants' of the story? How did they fall?

**20.** What did you think of the book's ending? Did the author succeed in wrapping up the many threads and strands in **Fall of Giants**? Which of the characters in Fall of Giants do you expect to be reading about in books two and three of The Century Trilogy?

## Author Bio

Ken Follett is one of the world's best-loved authors, selling more than 188 million copies of his 36 books. Follett's first bestseller was *EYE OF THE NEEDLE*, a spy story set in the Second World War. In 1989, *THE PILLARS OF THE EARTH* was published and has since become Follett's most popular novel. It reached #1 on bestseller lists around the world and was an Oprah's Book Club pick. Its sequels, *WORLD WITHOUT END* and *A COLUMN OF FIRE*, and prequel *THE EVENING AND THE MORNING*, proved equally popular, and the *Kingsbridge* series has sold more than 50 million copies worldwide. Follett lives in Hertfordshire, England, with his wife, Barbara. Between them they have five children, six grandchildren and three Labradors.

## Critical Praise

"Sure to be one of the season's inevitable and unavoidable blockbusters --- and not undeservedly."

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