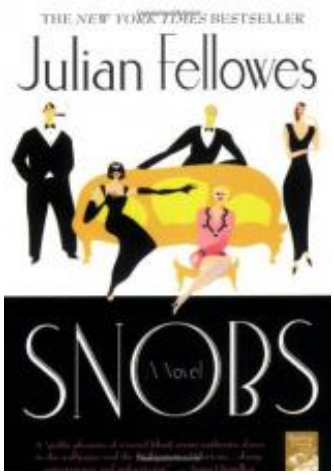
Snobs

by Julian Fellowes



About the Book

"The English, of all classes as it happens, are addicted to exclusivity. Leave three Englishmen in a room and they will invent a rule that prevents a fourth joining them."

The best comedies of manners are often deceptively simple, seamlessly blending social critique with character and story. In his superbly observed first novel, Julian Fellowes, winner of an Academy Award for his original screenplay of *Gosford Park*, brings us an insider's look at a contemporary England that is still not as classless as is popularly supposed.

Edith Lavery, an English blonde with large eyes and nice manners, is the daughter of a moderately successful accountant and his social-climbing wife. While visiting his parents' stately home as a paying guest, Edith meets Charles, Earl of Broughton, and heir to the Marquess of Uckfield, who runs the family estates in East Sussex and Norfolk. To the gossip columns he is one of the most eligible young aristocrats around.

When he proposes. Edith accepts. But is she really in love with Charles? Or with his title, his position, and all that goes with it?

One inescapable part of life at Broughton Hall is Charles's mother, the shrewd Lady Uckfield, known to her friends as "Googie" and described by the narrator---an actor who moves comfortably among the upper classes while chronicling their foibles---"as the most socially expert individual I have ever known at all well. She combined a watchmaker's eye for detail with a madam's knowledge of the world." Lady Uckfield is convinced that Edith is more interested in becoming a countess than in being a good wife to her son. And when a television company, complete with a gorgeous leading man, descends on Broughton Hall to film a period drama, "Googie's" worst fears seem fully justified.

In this wickedly astute portrait of the intersecting worlds of aristocrats and actors, Julian Fellowes establishes himself as an irresistible storyteller and a deliciously witty chronicler of modern manners.

Discussion Guide

1. What is your opinion of Edith? In what ways do you feel her choices are justified or otherwise? Did she know --- or should she have known --- what marriage to Charles would entail?

2. Edith might be said to have made a "bargain" in life. She has chosen to provide herself with a position of importance and power rather than to marry for love. Is this kind of bargain immoral in our day and age --- or is it her failure to stick to the deal that puts her at fault?

3. Both the narrator and Julian Fellowes have a certain soft spot for Lady Uckfield. How do you feel about Googie's approach to life, including the value she places on doing things "properly"?

4. The Uckfields and Charles accept that their largely unearned status carries with it certain public duties and responsibilities. How is hereditary obligation, in exchange for privilege, useful in a society? In what ways is it detrimental?

5. Contrast the actors' world to life at Broughton. What are the attractions and limitations of both?

6. Who are the biggest snobs in the book, and how does this affect your view of them?

7. The ending of **Snobs** could be called cynical. Edith is "happy enough," which is hardly a fairytale conclusion. Is she right to "settle" for a reasonable level of contentment without continuing to search for more or should she have set off again into the unknown? In other words, is it moral or immoral to be realistic? In fact, what sort of future do you envision for Edith and Charles? How about for the other couples?

8. The narrator describes the English as "addicted to exclusivity. Leave three Englishmen in a room and they will invent a rule that prevents a fourth joining them." How does this manifest itself in American society? Would you say that Americans are also "addicted" to exclusivity, or is this a peculiarly English phenomenon?

9. F. Scott Fitzgerald said, "The rich are different from you and me." In what ways do the wealthy characters in **Snobs** seem different from --- or similar to --- other people you've met?

10. What do you think of the narrator's observation that "one of the basic truths of life is that, as a general rule, the world takes you at your own estimation"?

11. Julian Fellowes says in his interview that he sees **Snobs** as being more about choice than about class. How do you rate the relative importance of social standing and their own actions in the main characters' lives?

12. How do the characters' perceptions of the different lives being lived around them differ from the reality? Is Charles's view of the stage world accurate? Is Mrs. Lavery's idea of the aristocratic life accurate? How much misunderstanding is caused by inaccurate preconceptions of what other people are going through?

Author Bio

Educated at Ampleforth and Magdalene College, Cambridge, Julian Fellowes is a multi-award-winning actor, writer, director and producer. As creator, sole writer, and executive producer of the hit television series "Downton Abbey," Fellowes has won three Emmy awards.

Fellowes received the Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay for *Gosford Park* (2002). His work was also honored by the Writer's Guild of America, The New York Film Critics' Circle and the National Society of Film Critics for Best Screenplay. Other writing credits for film include *Piccadilly Jim* (2004), *Vanity Fair* (2004), *Young Victoria* (2009), *The Tourist* (2010), *Romeo & Juliet* (2013), and the upcoming three-part drama "Doctor Thorne" for ITV. Fellowes also directed the award-winning films *Separate Lies* and *From Time to Time*. Fellowes wrote the books for the Tony-nominated stage production of "Mary Poppins" and "School of Rock: The Musical," which opened on Broadway in December 2015, and is written and produced by Andrew Lloyd Webber.

Fellowes has authored two novels: the international bestsellers SNOBS (2005) and PAST IMPERFECT (2008/2009).

Julian Fellowes became a life peer in 2010. He lives in Dorset and London with his wife, Emma.

Critical Praise

"An hilariously snobbish novel about hilariously snobbish people involved in a society scandal...Mr. Fellowes knows his turf well."

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