



## The Stars Look Down

*A.J. Cronin*

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First published in 1935, *The Stars Look Down* tells the story of a North Country mining community as its inhabitants make their way through the various social and political challenges of the early 20th century. Digging into workers' rights, social change, and the relationship between labor and capitalism, the struggles of the novel's trifecta of protagonists—politically minded miner David Fenwick, ambitious drifter Joe Gowlan, and frustrated yet meek mining-baron's son Arthur Barras—remain compelling and relevant to readers in the 21st century.

*The Stars Look Down* is one of many tales of the hardships of coal-mining communities during the industrial pre-war, World War I, and interwar periods in Britain, but stands out for its unflinching prose, universal themes, and keen storytelling. The novel was adapted into a 1940 film starring Michael Redgrave as Davey Fenwick, is a New York Times Critics' Pick, and is included in *The New York Times Guide to the Best 1,000 Movies Ever Made*.

## About the Author

Archibald Joseph (A.J.) Cronin was a Scottish author and physician born in 1896. He is known for such popular works as *The Citadel*, *The Stars Look Down*, and *The Keys of the Kingdom*. *The Citadel* inspired social change in the United Kingdom by helping to promote conversations about ethics in medicine and paved the way for the eventual formation of the National Health Service. His novels and novellas have been widely adapted for radio, film, and television, including the Oscar-nominated 1938 film *The Citadel* starring Robert Donat, Rosalind Russell, Ralph Richardson, and Rex Harrison, and the long-running BBC radio drama *Country Doctor*.

Called “uncannily like Dickens” by *The New York Times*, Cronin received his medical degree from Glasgow University in 1925 and was appointed Medical Inspector of Mines for Great Britain in 1925. During this tenure, Cronin inspected mining outfits across South Wales, an experience that would heavily influence his writing career. Although Cronin went on to practice medicine in both Glasgow and London, his first novel, written in 1931 and titled *Hatter's Castle*, became a bestseller in England, after which he devoted his time entirely to writing. He continued to enjoy widespread success as a novelist into the 1940s and 1950s, with many of his novels becoming bestsellers. By the late '50s, Cronin's total sales in the U.S. had passed seven million, and his works had been widely translated across the globe. Cronin is still considered one of the English-speaking world's most successful and appreciated authors. Cronin continued to write into his eighties, and passed away at the age of 84 in Montreux, Switzerland in 1981.

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