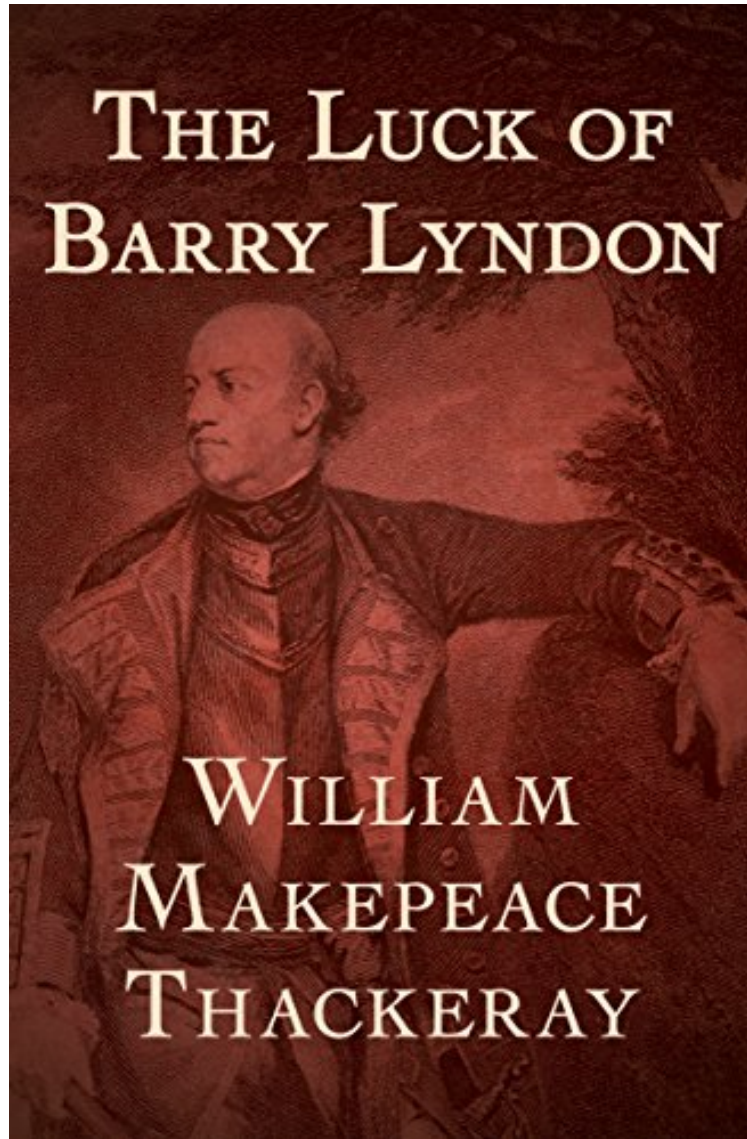


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## The Luck of Barry Lyndon (English Edition)

*Von William Makepeace Thackeray*  
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**Von William Makepeace Thackeray : The Luck of Barry Lyndon (English Edition)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Luck of Barry Lyndon (English Edition):

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen4 von 4 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Yet Another Novel Without a HeroVon Tristram ShandyWilliam Makepeace Thackeray, who in his own time was vying for the peak of popularity among Victorian readers with the Inimitable Dickens himself, would by now be completely eclipsed in modern bookshops as it happened to Bulwer-Lytton, for instance , were it not for his still well-known novel

Vanity Fair (1848), which proclaimed itself a novel without a hero, as it mercilessly satirized Victorian society. Although Thackeray's way of narrating and constructing his novels is rather stilted and redolent of 18th century literary fashion which, by the way, is rather appealing to me, his manner of describing reality, of characterizing people and their motives is by far more down-to-earth than the sentimentalism and sensationalism of his major competitor. Even four years before Thackeray wrote the novel that should grant him literary longevity, he came up with another novel that definitely had no hero in it. In *The Luck of Barry Lyndon* (1844), he chose a very unreliable first-person narrator, an Irish rogue named Redmond Barry, who tells his readers the story of his life, his struggle for prosperity and eminence, a struggle, however, that was mainly waged at card tables and in boudoirs, because hard work and honest trade are not among Redmond Barry's uncountable virtues. The original title of the novel already hints at the fact that our hero rather relies on luck and his skills at manipulating it and the headings of individual chapters still retain this reference even if Thackeray later changed the title of the book into *The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon, Esq.* In the tradition of the picaresque novel established by Fielding or Smollett, Barry Lyndon leads an unsteady life, which even entangles him into the Seven Years War, where he fights in the ranks of the English as well as the Prussian armies and mirroring the author's critical view on the military takes no great delight in it. Whether in the army, or linked up with his scapegrace uncle, Barry tries to get his advantages over people around him by bullying or by meanest intrigues, and it is a mixture of these fine cultural techniques that finally secures him one of the richest and most eminent English widows and endows him with wealth and the right to count himself among the English peerage. Nevertheless, Barry is better at achieving wealth and influence than at wielding and securing them, and soon his brutish recklessness heralds his downfall into disgrace, poverty, and alcoholism. Well, he was an alcoholic before, but with a view to his social position, one would not have called this personal flaw alcoholism, but rather referred to it as undaunted conviviality. What can a reader expect from *Barry Lyndon*? Those who anticipate a roller-coaster of a novel, packed with adventure and excitement like duels, war stories, and the thrill of a scoundrel finally brought to justice, had better turn to some other book because *Barry Lyndon* is rather detached in style to the events its hero recounts. Thackeray possessed an extensive knowledge of 18th century life and history, and he uses it lavishly in order to have his rascally hero name-drop and show off lest any reader might doubt Redmond Barry's connections and importance. Another typical Thackeray feature, which distinguishes him from Dickens's theatre-like style that relies heavily on scenic presentation with ample dialogue, is a panoramic style of writing, i.e. Thackeray and his first-person narrator rarely zoom in on any particular situation or turning point but instead concentrate on the broad development of things. What makes *Barry Lyndon* very interesting all the same, is the obvious incongruity between the narrator's high opinion of himself and his depraved lifestyle and actions, which he presents in a vulgarly grandiloquent style. In one situation, for instance, Barry remembers an autodidact who has been forced to join the Prussian army and who bears it with quite noble stoicism, and he scornfully refers to this philosophical stance as weakness and egotism, which he according to his own testimony heartily despises. Look whos talking, you might think. From time to time, Barry's bombastic fits of self-adulation are deflated by critical remarks of the fictitious editor of these invaluable memoirs; although these insertions do not really seem to be necessary as any perspicacious reader will easily see through Barry's machinations, yet they are extremely amusing. What I find especially fascinating about the book is Thackeray's apparent disillusionment about people in general and his dissatisfaction with Victorian literary fashions, which adhere to romantic notions of poetic justice and which aim at the reader's moral improvement. In his final lines, the author muses, It is as right to look at a beauty as at a hunchback; and, if to look, to describe, too: nor can the most prodigious genius improve upon the original. Who knows, then, but the old style of Moliere and Fielding, who drew from nature, may come into fashion again, and replace the terrible, the humorous, always the genteel impossible now in vogue? Then, with the sham characters, the sham MORAL may disappear? The one is a sickly humbug as well as the other. For sure, there are more *Barry Lyndons* than *Oliver Twists* and *John Jarndyces* roaming the streets, the parliaments and the executive suites.

**Kurzbeschreibung** A continent-spanning adventure featuring one of literature's greatest rogues Redmond Barry has almost all the qualities of a gentleman: he speaks well, has learned courtly etiquette, and can hold his own with a sword in hand. But passion is his downfall—passion for life, for excitement, and unfortunately, for his cousin Nora. When he almost kills Nora's suitor in a duel, Barry flees to Dublin, and the adventure of his life begins. A consummate rake and con man, Barry finds himself on the battlefield against the Prussians in the Seven Years War after losing everything. But war and life, for that matter, is not exactly what Barry wished or expected it to be. A braggart's tale through and through, with an anti-hero of epic proportions, *The Luck of Barry Lyndon* is a brisk romp through one of literature's most unusual lives. This ebook has been professionally proofread to ensure accuracy and readability on all devices.