



**Magnificent Ambersons: "So long as we can lose
any happiness, we possess some."**

Booth Tarkington

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The *Magnificent Ambersons* (1918) is one of Booth Tarkington's most successful novels. It partly owes its success to its cinematographic adaptation by the renowned Orson Welles in 1942. The book contains 35 chapters and follows the descent of the Ambersons from aristocracy to the working class. The events take place in a fictitious town much similar to Tarkington's native Indianapolis. The family's fortune has been made in the late nineteenth century by Major Amberson, the grandfather of the novel's protagonist George Amberson. The latter has been raised as a pampered and spoiled child to become an irresponsible adult. He falls in love with Lucy who comes from a modest family. As the town is industrially and financially transforming, George's pretentiousness plays a major role in the gradual loss of the family's advantages and magnificence. The narrative generally follows the bankruptcy of certain aristocratic families and the rise of other families to great fortunes. Ironically, one of these rising families is Lucy's family. Noble titles and family history are contrasted with pragmatism and serious perspiration in a way that highlights the typically American value of cherishing the latter and looking down on the former.

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