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# 84 Charing Cross Road



## Synopsis

It all began with a letter inquiring about second-hand books, written by Helene Hanff in New York, and posted to a bookshop at 84, Charing Cross Road in London. As Helene's sarcastic and witty letters are responded to by the stodgy and proper Frank Doel of 84, Charing Cross Road, a relationship blossoms into a warm and charming long-distance friendship lasting many years.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 starsÂ  See all reviewsÂ  (311 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #84,044 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #44 inÂ  Books > Literature & Fiction > Essays & Correspondence > Letters #2351 inÂ  Books > Literature & Fiction > Classics

## Customer Reviews

Helene Hanff was a New York writer and Frank Doel was a London bookseller. This book chronicles the letters they wrote over a period of many years to one another. Although they never met, they became true friends bonded by their love of literature. Having read this tiny little gem, I can tell you that I'm not even sure why I liked it so much. Maybe it was because I loved seeing a warm friendship develop between two total strangers. Maybe it was because I loved the dry wit of Helene and the staunch Britishness of Frank. Maybe it was because I liked hearing about the WWII years, how the people of Britain sacrificed, and how one caring American woman made a difference to this small group of Britishers. One note: this is the only book I have ever read that is truly enhanced by the video. Read the book, then rent the movie. Anne Bancroft is the perfect Helene and Anthony Hopkins is brilliant as Frank.

I waited too long to finally read 84, Charing Cross Road by Helene Hanff and I have no reasonable excuse for it. Someone had lent me a copy and it was the only book in my backpack on the commute to work one morning as I had forgotten to bring the book I was reading, so I started it and had one of the best journeys of my life. I immediately ran out and bought my own copy as I knew

that I would read this book over and over again. It is very funny and, in the end, quite touching in ways that all readers will understand and appreciate. The best endorsement of this book is that it will get one to investigate all sorts of old classics and look at reading and writing in new and different ways. I personally will be letting used books fall open just to see what interested a reader from the past and what he or she is trying to tell me. I little trick gratefully picked up from the delightful Helene Hanff.

This is the story of an American writer (the author of the book) who strikes up a friendship by mail with a bookseller in England. The entire book is a series of unedited and un-commented-on letters exchanged between Hanff and the Marks & Co. booksellers at 84 Charing Cross Road. Her primary pen pal is a man named Frank Doel, with whom she shares a love of old books. [Perhaps this is the point where I should say that I flatly disagree, without reservation, with the previous reviewers who believe there was a potential romantic attachment between the two of them.] The correspondence runs from 1949 until 1969, during which time Helene and the people at 84 Charing Cross Road exchange Christmas gifts and news of their families, but never meet. At least in the early years of the correspondence, almost every year Ms. Hanff states her intention to come over to visit England, but something always comes up to prevent the trip. In 1969, one of Hanff's letters to Frank Doel is answered by another member of the firm, informing her that Frank Doel has died. This is a beautiful book, which can be read in 45 minutes. I suppose every reader will take his or her own lessons from the book, but here is mine: If there is something you really want to do in your life, then DO IT when the opportunity arises. Time is finite. If you keep saying, "Maybe next year," there will eventually come a time when there IS no next year. It is a painful tragedy that Helene Hanff never got to England to meet Frank Doer and the other people at Marks & Company, and that poignant sadness is what stayed with me after I had closed the book.

84 Charing Cross Road is a small book of correspondence between Helene Hanff, the author and Frank Doel, a London book seller. These letters chronicle their lives over a twenty year period from 1949 to 1969. Though never meeting, they share a very special friendship, almost a chaste love affair, that extends to his co-workers and family. This is a charming and delightful book about two people you come to care for through their letters and wish you knew in person. A must for your home library. A book you'll read over and over again and share with friends.

This is a true story--that's always a plus for me--about correspondence between a New York

booklover/writer and the staff of a used and antiquarian book shop in London. These business correspondents evolve over the years into members of a kind of extended family. The book is rather amazing because it is a quick read yet packs a powerful emotional wallop. To enjoy this book, you have to be open to books that explore compassion, emotions, and human relationships in a non-glossy, realistic manner. Normally, I'm a one-read guy. I read a book and pass it on. Yet, I've read 84 Charing Cross Road three times -- so far -- in spite of seeing the movie version three times as well. I'd place 84 Charing Cross Road among my top five favorite books. Rodney

I must admit I saw the movie first. Very literary unique and bitter-sweet true story which touch my soul. I found the book and it is even better with detailed description and sincerity. I particularly enjoyed reading the letter-format of it. It is so warm hearted and just like reading letters from friends. In fact I even felt a little guilty as if I am reading other people's private letters... This excellent book shines in drawing out the cultural and social differences between London and New York during the period of Frank and Helene letters correspondence. 84 Charing Cross Road changed their lives. They developed special friendship, an unspoken love and care for each other without even seeing each other. This is truly amazing! I think "84 Charing Cross Road" is one of the best book I had read. Easy to read, great story line, literary educational and most importantly touches my heart and soul.

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