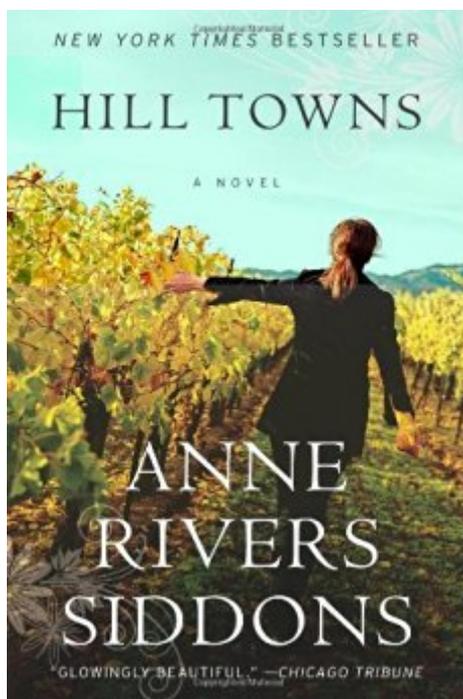


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Hill Towns: Novel, A



Synopsis

Hill Towns is a classic novel of remarkable emotional power, insight, and sensitivity from Anne Rivers Siddons, whose books live on the New York Times bestseller list and in the hearts of millions of her adoring fans. One of the acknowledged masters of contemporary Southern fiction—the author of such phenomenally popular works as *Nora, Nora*; *Outer Banks, Islands*; and *Sweetwater Creek*—Siddons carries the reader from the mountains of Tennessee to the breathtaking Tuscan countryside as she brilliantly chronicles the unraveling of a marriage. Pat Conroy (*The Prince of Tides*) says, “She ranks among the best of us,” and *Hill Towns* is the proof.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I wanted so badly to like this book. I recently relished reading Anne River Siddons' *The House Next Door*, and have thoroughly enjoyed other books she's written. As an Italian-American, I can't resist books that are set in Italy, and reviews have described this book as a travelogue through the hills of Tuscany. I suppose my expectations were very high for an "Under The Tuscan Sun"-like novel written by an author whose style I admire and appreciate. I picked this book up three times, tried

moving onto other reading material and returning to it afterwards, hoping I'd be in a different mindset and could open up to it better, but this novel simply wasn't going to make its way into my heart despite having so much promise. The two main characters were quite weird, and not very likeable. The book opens in a university town in the mountains of Tennessee, with an agoraphobic heroine who won't leave the hill on which she lives. Eventually, with therapy she is able to take a trip to Italy with her husband. The dynamics of these characters and their relationship is too intense. What saves the novel is the luscious settings, which the author succeeds in describing in vivid detail. Still, I found the book so oppressively boring that I had to quit reading about 1/2 of the way through, and just skimmed through to the end. The couple had a blind daughter, who was briefly mentioned in the opening chapters - now that's a storyline that should have been developed better. It would have been fascinating to learn how a mother who is afraid to leave her community raises a blind child into a well-rounded, quite normal adult. All in all, this book was a huge disappointment, although it can't be said that I didn't try my best to appreciate it.

The plot of Hill Towns could have been developed into an enjoyable novel, but Ms. Siddons style has come to overshadow her story. The vast majority of her sentences include a cloying and overblown simile or metaphor and sound like they were written for a creative writing assignment titled "Write a story using as many similes and metaphors as you possibly can". Where is the editor of this book? Isn't it his/her job to weed the material?

This book was interesting to read on a rainy day, but it was fairly long-winded and the plot did not end in an inventive or conclusive way. It's always interesting when you start reading a book and the first three chapters are so different from the rest of the book. The first three chapters start defining the character Cat and her husband Joe, who live in a college town on a mountain and have a "beautiful" life. If the novel had been about Cat's life story or life at this college town, it would have been an entirely different novel, and probably more interesting. There could even have been more of a story about their daughter Lacey who is blind and has traveled all over the world. But instead Cat and Joe end up going to Italy to see two friends get married. I think the descriptions of Italy are beautiful and fascinating and reading this book really made me want to go there. But most of the characters were not well-developed or that complicated, and since the rest of the book is about their interactions, I found it a little difficult to be that interested. For instance, Cat meets a painter who wants to paint her, but she seems fairly naive about the whole thing. The painter is described as being very rough and macho, and also very sensitive, but it seemed to me that he just wants to get

Cat into bed and wasn't very complicated at all. Cat keeps saying that her husband Joe becomes like a stranger, but he wasn't even developed that much before they went to Italy, so it's hard to know. The book seems to lumber on for long periods of time and then ends abruptly and somewhat predictably. A good read, but nothing earth-shattering or life-changing.

After reading and loving 4 other Anne Rivers Siddons books I could hardly wait to sit down with this book. It is a 400 page story of a group of people traveling Italy and eating and sightseeing and eating and sightseeing with a little sexual tension thrown in. If this was my first Siddons book I probably would have never bought a second one. It is certainly not in the same league as her book "Up Island."

I agree with what most others say -- not the author's best! I actually liked the parts in Italy much better than the beginning, which I thought went on for WAY too long, with Cat harping on and on about her terrible childhood and her agoraphobia. Booring. In fact, I considered not continuing with the book after about 50 pages of Idyllic Life On The Mountain and Great Sex With My Husband. But the Italian stuff was interesting. I haven't read all of her books yet, but Colony is fabulous and so were Downtown and Up Island. Outer Banks was pretty good, too. Interesting how it seems like Siddons's married heroines always stay faithful in the end, no matter how jerky their husbands are and how sexy the competition is. Guess she is really a traditional Southern girl at heart!

This was my first Siddons book, and I will try others because, overall, I enjoyed myself while reading which is pretty much my main criteria. :-) However, I thought Cat's husband Joe was a sniveling little weasel. Cat kept saying how great he was, but his behavior as described here was that of a weak little man. Ick. The Yolanda character might have been interesting, but was too much of a caricature. I thought Cat and, especially, Sam, were the most intriguing. Sam turned out to be a REALLY interesting character study by the end, as was the unique relationship he'd worked out with his wife. That was the best part of the book.

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