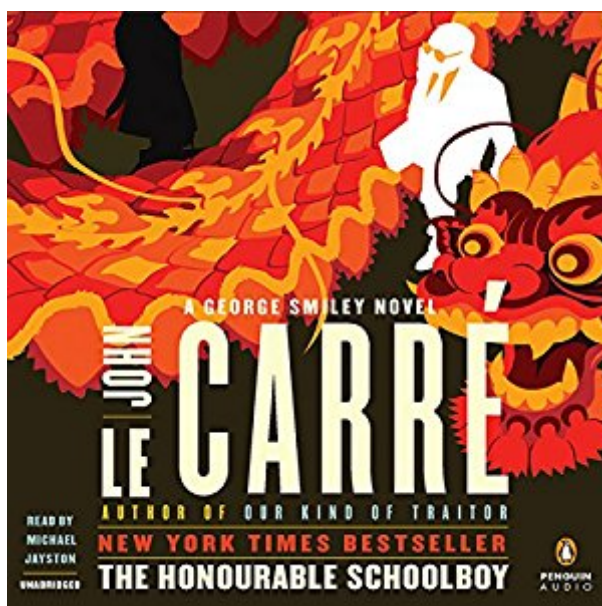


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# The Honourable Schoolboy: A George Smiley Novel



## Synopsis

As the fall of Saigon looms, master spy George Smiley must outmaneuver his Soviet counterpart on a battlefield that neither can afford to lose. The mole has been eliminated, but the damage wrought has brought the British Secret Service to its knees. Given charge of the gravely compromised Circus, George Smiley embarks on a campaign to uncover what Moscow Centre most wants to hide. When the trail goes cold at a Hong Kong gold seam, Smiley dispatches Gerald Westerby to shake the money tree. A part-time operative with cover as a philandering journalist, Westerby insinuates himself into a war-torn world where allegiances - and lives - are bought and sold. Brilliantly plotted and morally complex, *The Honourable Schoolboy* is the second installment of John le Carré's renowned Karla trilogy, and a riveting portrayal of post-colonial espionage.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This my favorite of all of Le Carre's works. I find it worth re-reading every few years. The main character is very well-developed and engaging. The moral, political and philosophical issues raised are timeless, and are not given facile, obvious solutions. I consider a book a classic if I benefit and have a new experience even in re-reading it. The Honourable Schoolboy always rewards my return visits. The novel begins at a leisurely pace and accelerates throughout as good thrillers tend to do. It can be enjoyed as a thriller because it's a great ride. I read it as quickly as possible the first time. Now, I savor it.

This is the second book in the Karla series and for my review please see the final of the trilogy, Smiley's People. This is my third copy of this work, a present from my youngest son who notes on the fly-leaf that it, in its turn, is "A replacement for a well-used book." This copy is already six years old and is displaying evidence of many re-readings, as do all my "Smiley" series! Of course Le Carré, as usual in his craft, builds magnificent tension and intrigue whilst evoking Hong Kong ("Honkers") into a reality for the readers who have never been there, or a fond recollected memory for those who have. His usual strong character and ambience building is in evidence again in this story but, for me, the hero of this book is not the real one (The Honorable Gerald Westerby, "Horse Writer" and hack and amazingly resourceful "London Occasional" spy) but a beautifully crafted incidental persona called Fawn. Sharing the "babysitting" (body guarding) of George Smiley with Peter Guillam, Fawn is described as a hovering dark-eyed factotum ... a sleek diminutive creature, who, when Smiley does one of his usual disappearing acts and leaves Fawn behind - or gives him the slip - Fawn seems to literally pine for his master. Guillam discovers him in his little den one evening is shocked to find Fawn "in a near-foetal crouch, winding a handkerchief around and round his thumb like a ligature, in order to hurt himself". The odorous Roddy Martingdale, a single and very singular senior Civil Servant is accompanying Peter and Smiley after a secret meeting when Fawn flutters up, crying out for his 'Chief' and waving a note. He is intercepted by Peter and the note is confiscated and Fawn sent away in disgrace for creating a fuss, with Peter Guillam hissing "...bloody little drama queen racing around London in your gym shoes!" Martingdale is entranced, quite breathless with excitement... "What are darling little creature ... are all spies as pretty as that ... how positively Venetian. I shall volunteer at once!" Yet Fawn's fellow Departmental "heavies" are afraid of him, with good reason ... as the story unfolds in the finale, Le Carré produces, in a few scant and clever lines, a powerful image that reflects Fawn's sinister skills and his even more sinister role in the story's ending that is shortly to follow. It is decided to send the taut and impatient Fawn into the field, into the final action ... "Where Fawn had stood, two squash-balls slowly rolled a distance before coming to a halt. "God help us all", somebody murmured fervently."

Absolutely first-rate. John Le Carré is a writer's writer. A masterful story teller whose tales deliciously drip with British elitist wit and slang. I always find myself dreading coming to the end of his cleverly unfolding stories of cold war espionage. This story is no exception and but for "Smiley's People" may be his best. I travel abroad quite a bit. I wish I could have traveled to the many river ports so vividly described in this tale of intrigue and revenge (on Smiley's part). I have read all his works and only wish there was one more to anticipate. Some people crave talent. Mr. Le Carré was

born with it. So unfair.

Written just after the conclusion of the Vietnam War, *The Honourable Schoolboy* casts journalist Jerry Westerby as George Smiley's key field man in Asia tracking Moscow Centre's illicit funds across South East Asia and Hong Kong. Well researched, with lots of authentic local colour, the story romps along the backwaters and highlights the squalor associated with the war and the memorable characters who were bit players in the South East Asian War at the time. I enjoyed the book a great deal though some of the romantic plot twists towards the end seemed a bit fanciful.

When I read Le Carré (one of my favorite all time Authors) I am typically looking for vintage Cold War spy novels. I want an icy grey barren Russia, long trench coats, chained smoked cigarettes, huge quantities of vodka, walther pistols and midnight assassination attempts. I love the clichés and when I read a spy novel I want every one of them. *The Honourable Schoolboy* had almost none of these; it is set in Southeast Asia, contains no vodka and has no one named Vladimir. No pistols, no trench coats and a body count the sits at a mere 3. That said.....I LOVE THIS BOOK!!I have never read another author who can set the mood of a book as accurately as Le Carré nor another who can tell a story of the main character through the eyes of the ancillary characters so well. His characters are emotive and yet amoral and his plots are startlingly realistic. This has every great quality of the spy genre without all of the clichés and truly stands out for it. In *The Honourable Schoolboy* Le Carré has brought us another one of his fantastic characters, Jerry Westerby, and one step closer to what I expect to be the stunning conclusion of the iconic Karla trilogy. Highly recommended

The business of Intelligence Agencies is not necessarily spying but the trading of information to other interested parties. After *Tinker Tailor*, George must restart MI6 from scratch and they need product. Rest of the story is about a field agent in Hong Kong, Jerry Westerby, following a line of inquiry from the newly formed MI6. His story is more compelling than the original "treasure" everyone was seeking.

A very good follow-up book to *Tinker, Tailor*... Suspenseful and intriguing. Highly recommend the first story before reading this one.

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