

# Philip k. dick's man in the high castle: a book report

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This is my fourth and final paper. I chose to read *The Man in the High Castle*, simply because of availability of the book. It was an excellent choice, in my opinion. I'm probably not the only one who's liked the book, as it has apparently won a Hugo.

The Nazis and the Japanese won Second World War, and now rule the world. Isn't that so? No, that's not true. Consult the oracle if you don't believe me. However, imagine that it would be so. Actually, you don't have to; Philip K. Dick has already imagined it for you, and chronicled a selected set of events into *The Man in the High Castle*.

Most of the story takes place in San Francisco. Germany is maybe visited once, and Japan not at all. There is no need really, as the presence of these countries is strongly felt in the U. S. The whole planet has been divided between the Nazis and the Japanese, and there are planes for other planets as well.

The story is not just about oppression under Nazi rule, as one might expect. No, a lot of it is about American artifacts, for example. The actions of the Nazis do have a negative effect on many people's lives, maybe even on their own. People are forced to act in ways they believe they shouldn't, and this is not good for the spirit. Need for spiritual guidance is evident.

Pretty much everyone whose lives the book describes in any detail turns to an oracle for guidance. The oracle is *I Ching*, Book of Changes, the Fifth Book of Confucian wisdom. This book is as important a part of *The Man in the High Castle* as the Nazis are. And no wonder if people refer to the oracle, as it

never seems to be wrong. It even knows the truth about the world.  
Fascinating.

I Ching is not the only important book in the book; there is another, although a lesser one. The Grasshopper Lies Heavy is a bestseller, regardless of being banned by the Nazis. It tells about a world more similar to that of the reader of *The Man in the High Castle*.

Dick's book is not about any one person, not even the man in the high castle. It is about a world. There is a core group of people, through whom the reader can explore the world. The narration keeps constantly switching from one of these people to another. This approach helps to ensure that one doesn't get tired reading about the exploits of any one character. Same tactic is commonly used in soap operas. Except that here the core characters don't interact with each other very often.

One of the most interesting characters, for me at least, is Robert Childan, the owner of American Artistic Handcrafts Inc. He really doesn't strike to me as your average salesman, and his thoughts are interesting to follow.

*The Man in the High Castle* has something that captures the reader. "And my attention is fixed; I can't look away."