

# [The man in the grey flannel suit](https://assignbuster.com/the-man-in-the-grey-flannel-suit/)

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Universally acclaimed when first published in 1955, " The Man in the Gray

Flannel Suit" by Sloan Wilson is one of the best novels written about the post-WW II

lifestyle and how families were coping with the traumas induced on the men who saw

combat overseas. " The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit" was an international bestseller,

translated into twenty-six languages and its title has become a permanent part of our

cultural vocabulary. The novel was made into a movie in 1956, starring Gregory Peck

and Jennifer Jones as Tom and Betsy Rath, with Fredric March and Lee J. Cobb in

supporting roles. The book have become hugely popular, and the continues to appear in

the references of sociologists to America's discontented businessman it has been re-

released by Four Walls Eight Windows after more than four decades (Peak, 2003).
The story of novel revolves round the Tom and Betsy Rath, a young couple living
in a rundown house in Westport, Connecticut. The immediate impression that whole plot
of story gives are its ties with traditional values and instances. The first things that brings
the Tom and Betsy Rath's family close to a traditional middle class family is their
continuous struggle to find contentment in their hectic and material culture. They have
every thing: three healthy children, a nice home, a steady income, to be happy and enjoy
the life, but for some reason they are not. They live in a traditional style rundown house.
and as Manhattan charitable organization pays Tom an average salary so they have to
face financial tribulations too. Their three children are very much like a middle class
traditional family children are very much TV-addicted kids. Tom finds himself caught up
in the corporate rat race what he encounters there propels him on a voyage of self-
discovery that will turn his world inside out. All their problems seem small, and most of
their problems stem from themselves; Tom's apathy, Betsy's panic, their unwillingness
and following inability to live within their modest but sustainable means (Meader, 2003).
There are few examples of external stress that contribute to difficult (familial)
environments for interactions. The prominent example of external stress that greatly
influenced the Tom and Betsy Rath's family is Tom's adulterous affair that he has with a
woman named Maria while waiting for redeployment orders in Rome during World War
II. Tom lived with Maria for two months before being sent to the Pacific front. Right
before he leaves, Maria tells him that she is pregnant, but he never sees her again.
Ten years later, when one of Tom's old soldier friends, who's Italian war bride is
a relative of Maria's, tells him about his shameful secret of having an illegitimate son -
and the irony is, of course, that it results the greatest stress to family environment as Tom
have cheated his wife and fathered an illegitimate son and it was The worse act than to
killed 17 men during WW II (Elisabeth, 2007).
The second example of external stress, is the tension that develops when the

caretaker of Tom's late grandmother made an attempt to fraudulently inherit her home.

Rath has to take stand against Schultz (Joseph Sweeney), the former caretaker of his late

grandmother, for his native home where his family was living. He must convince Judge

Bernstein that Schultz is just a fraudulent conniver in order to retain his household (Man

in the Gray Flannel Suit, n. d. para. 2).

The greatest example of change within the context of the traditional family values
is the Tom and Betsy's careful process of figuring themselves out. Tom Rath learns to
become responsible to his wife, family, neighborhood, the things he did in the past. He
accepts his past faults, decides that if he's ever going to make it in the world he has to
improve his relationship with his wife and family first and foremost. He becomes a better
person by deciding to face the truth and live responsibly. To gain respect from his family
and peers instead of working towards a life with no substance at all might be harder work
than anything he'd ever attempted before but, by God, he was going to try. Tom Rath,
responsibly, decides he would rather have a soul. Tom and Betsy's struggles again put
meaning into their lives while meeting their obligations to the world that they owe
(Elisabeth, 2007).
The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit, by Sloan Wilson, was a best selling novel for
over half a year after its publication in 1955. There has been munch assumption as to why
this novel became so popular. The most important reason of its success was its ability to
depict the everyday working man his family and the issues that he has to face daily. Tom
Rath became a character that shared many of the same struggles that working class
America had to face in their own lives.

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