

# [Arrowsmith guessed at many things so they could](https://assignbuster.com/arrowsmith-guessed-at-many-things-so-they-could/)

Arrowsmith is a classic American novel written by SinclairLewis.

Lewis wrote this book in the early 1900’s as acurrent outlook on the world of science in that time. Themain theme it focuses on is commercialism and its effect onscience. During this time period there were many advancesin the field of medicine; everyone was racing to find the cureto deadly diseases and then patent it and profit off it. Helpinghumanity was more of a business than a service to the humanrace as doctors and institutes became more and morecapitalistic. Like a business trying to maximize its profit, many doctors and scientists cut corners and guessed at manythings so they could get their products or methods on themarket as fast as possible. However, there were a fewscientists who stayed strictly devoted to their science, notletting money, glory, and success corrupt them. Scientistssuch as this despised commercialism and held contemptagainst the other doctors and scientists who fell into thatsystem of capitalism. The book follows the life of MartinArrowsmith, a scientist who is torn between pure scienceand commercialism.

He wants to be a true scientist but he ispushed into commercialism by everyone he meets, exceptfor a select few. Among the few is Max Gottlieb, who isMartin’s model for everything a true scientist should be. Gottlieb is a bacteriologist who is completely against thecapitalist values of commercial doctors and scientists; hedevotes himself religiously to his science, and he believes inbeing completely thorough and not guessing or acceptingthings without completely understanding them. TerryWickett, a disciple of Gottlieb’s, holds all the same valuesand attitudes as Gottlieb toward capitalism andcommercialism. He helps Martin break away fromcommercialism, and become a true scientist. Another personwho greatly helps Martin in his life is his first wife, LeoraTozer, who stands by and supports Martin no matter what.

She devotes herself to Martin as much as Gottlieb devoteshimself to his science. She supports him in whatever decisionhe decides to make, she helps and comforts him in his timesof need, and she remains completely loyal to him at all times, even when he is not completely loyal to her. The story startswith Martin Arrowsmith as a medical student at WinnemacUniversity, where he was first introduced to commercialscience and pure science, and made to choose between thetwo.

It is here that Martin first meets Max Gottlieb, who wasa professor and the university and head of the bacteriologydepartment, and becomes completely in awe of him. Hisclassmates mock Martin for his choice in idol, because theysee Gottlieb as somewhat of a failure in life, simply becausehe is poor and not very high standing or recognized insociety, which is actually what Gottlieb prefers to be. A fewof Martin’s classmates that have a significant effect on his lifeare Ira Hinkley, Angus Duer, and Clif Clawson. Ira Hinkleyis a humanitarian, self-righteous reverend who later becomesa missionary in the West Indies. He is studying medicine forthe purpose of helping humanity and gaining glory for himselfalong the way.

Angus Duer is a social climber who isstudying science more for the sake of obtaining the inherentrespect held for doctors and scientists. He does all themethods and techniques with a cold precision but onlybecause he was told to do them, not because he wants tounderstand why things are the way they are. Clif Clawson iscompletely centered on making money and being successful. He went into medical school solely because he would beable to make a lot of money being a doctor or physician. The university essentially teaches students how to makemoney from their knowledge through commercialism, evenmore than the actual medical science itself. The followingpassage is part of a lesson that Dr. Roscoe Geake, who is aprofessor in the university, gives to his students.

“ Knowledgeis the greatest thing in the medical world but it’s no goodwhatever unless you can sell it, and to do this you must firstimpress your personality on the people who have the dollars. Whether the patient is a new or an old friend, you mustalways use salesmanship on him. Explain to him, also to hisstricken and anxious family, the hard work and thought youare giving to his case, and so make him feel that the goodyou have done him, or intend to do him, is even greater thanthe fee you plan to charge. Then, when he gets your