

The Natural Encyclopedia Article

The Natural by Bernard Malamud

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Contents

The Natural Encyclopedia Article.....	1
Contents.....	2
The Natural.....	3

The Natural

Bernard Malamud's acclaimed first novel, *The Natural* (1952), retells the Grail story of Arthurian legend as a modern baseball tale and metaphor for contemporary life. Malamud's middle-aged protagonist Roy Hobbs, both a Percival-like Grail knight and a Fisher King figure (as his name suggests), recovers from his near-fatal groin injury, joins the last place New York Knights, and brings new life to the team, its manager Pops Fisher (another Fisher King), and even the baseball field itself. Although he has the Grail (pennant) within his reach, Roy accepts a bribe and loses the final game. Predictably, the Hollywood version of *The Natural* (1984), directed by Barry Levinson and starring Robert Redford, turns Malamud's darkly comic tale into entertaining but standard cinematic fare. Roy refuses the bribe and—although gravely wounded—bangs a home run out of the park, knocking out the stadium lights, which burst like fireworks. Afterwards, Roy, his beloved Iris (Glenn Close), and their adolescent son return to live—presumably happily ever after—on Roy's family farm.

Further Reading:

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