Sinclair, Upton Beall

- **Born:** Sept. 20, 1878, Baltimore, Md.
- **Education:** City College of New York, B.A., 1897; Columbia University, 1897-1900
- **Accomplishments:** Author of numerous books, including *The Jungle* (1906), *The Profits of Religion* (1918), *Oil!* (1927), and *Dragon's Teeth* (1942), which won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction
- **Died:** Nov. 25, 1968, Bound Brook, N.J.

UPTON SINCLAIR, muckraking (investigative) journalist and author, wrote the novel *The Jungle*, which exposed the unsanitary conditions in the meatpacking industry. Published in 1906, it stands second only to Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) among influential social protest novels in U.S. history. Sinclair was also a socialist and an aspiring politician. He never won elective office, despite a campaign for Congress from New Jersey and two runs for governor of California.

Sinclair moved to New York City as a young boy. His salesman father suffered from alcoholism and was often unable to provide for the family. The boy lived on occasion with his mother's well-to-do parents, and he would say later that he became a socialist through his firsthand experience of the gap between riches and poverty. He began writing jokes and short stories for pulp magazines in his teens and was soon turning out a dime novel every week. He earned enough to pay his way through college and help support his parents.

Sinclair's first few attempts at serious literature, novels published in the early years of the 20th century, did not sell well, but his fortunes changed when the Kansas-based socialist magazine *Appeal to Reason* hired him to investigate the lives of immigrant workers in Chicago's stockyards and meatpacking plants. That assignment led to *The Jungle*, which was serialized in the magazine in 1905. Published in book form the following year, it brought the author his first taste of fame and financial success.

In addition to portraying the brutal mistreatment suffered by meat industry workers, *The Jungle* provided lurid descriptions of unsanitary practices that threatened public health by putting tainted meat on the market. These passages affected readers profoundly. Commenting on his book's impact, Sinclair said, "I aimed at the public's heart, and by accident I hit it in the stomach." The novel prompted a storm of public outrage that led to the passage in 1906 of important new federal laws, the Meat Inspection Act and the Pure Food and Drugs Act. Sinclair even met with President Theodore Roosevelt, who disagreed with the author's socialist politics but told him that the government, even in a capitalist system, should take "radical action" against the "arrogant and selfish greed" of big-money special interests.

With the money he earned from *The Jungle*, Sinclair helped found a cooperative living community in New Jersey. That living experiment lasted only four months before fire destroyed the community's buildings. Sinclair broke with many fellow socialists by favoring U.S. participation in World War I but spoke out against the imprisonment of antwar socialist leaders. Later, in the 1920s, Sinclair said that he had been wrong to support the war. Unsuccessful in several attempts to gain political office, he continued publishing politically motivated books throughout his long life, and he won a Pulitzer Prize for *The Dragon's Teeth*, his 1942 novel about the rise of the Nazi party in Germany.

SEE ALSO
- Industry, Muckrakers, Literature, Pure Food and Drugs Act (1906), Regulation

FURTHER READING

**Sitting Bull**

- **Born:** around 1831, Grand River, Dakota Territory
- **Accomplishments:** Sioux chief and holy man
- **Died:** Dec. 15, 1890, Standing Rock, S. D.

THE SIOUX CHIEF Sitting Bull (Tatanka-iyotake in his native language) was among the foremost Indian leaders at the end of the 19th century, when U.S. troops were fighting the tribes of the Great Plains. Born to the Hunkpapa band, part of the Lakota (or Teton) branch of the Sioux, Sitting Bull earned a dual reputation as a warrior and a holy man. In the 1860s, he became chief of all the Lakota.

In 1868, the Sioux nation and the U.S. government signed the Fort Laramie Treaty, which guaranteed that the Black Hills region of South Dakota would remain forever in Indian possession. The United States honored the treaty for less than a decade. In 1875, pressured by white settlers and gold prospectors who wanted access to the area, the government ordered the Sioux to abandon most of the Black Hills and settle on designated reservations.

Sitting Bull, along with Crazy Horse and another chief named Gall, led the resistance to the reservation order. Assisted by Cheyenne and Arapahoe allies, the Sioux army enjoyed some initial success. Their greatest victory occurred in 1876 at the Little Bighorn River in Montana, where the combined Indian forces annihilated Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer and all his troops. In the months after that battle, however, Sitting Bull and his followers had to flee to Canada to avoid the thousands of U.S. troops bent on avenging Custer's death.

In 1881, with his people threatened with starvation, Sitting Bull returned...