

By R. Siedlecki R. Siedlecki Vintage Books The popular Easton Press books are fine books, primarily because of their high quality production methods, e.g., full leather bound, hubbed spines, gilded edges, beautiful endpapers, archival quality paper, etc. But, the publisher did take liberties in changing the covers and spine designs, the colors of the leather, the lettering of the titles, the endpapers, and the frontispiece for selected titles . . . *within the same year* of publication. This could get confusing to the uninitiated.

To the book collector, dealer, or reseller who needs a basic introduction to the tricky variations of some Easton Press titles, I offer several examples or variants.

For the 1980 edition of Easton Press's "Grimm's Fairy Tales," there seems to be two (perhaps more?) different blue leather bindings and endpapers. The more desirable copy features a double frame of gilt designs on the top cover, with stylized flowers acting as borders within the frames. Surrounding the frames is a narrow, but bold gilt border. On the spine there are *six* compartments with a gilded frame in each of the five compartments. The sixth compartment has the book title in a gilded frame. The brown satin *moiré* endpapers reflect a contemporary design of boomerangs. This work, in my opinion, is the more desirable of the two 1980 Easton Press copies.

The other 1980 edition reflects a less intricate binding design. The top cover has a simple framed design of stylized scrolls. On the spine, there are only *four* compartments. There's a stylized scroll in each of the three compartments, and the book's title in gilt is in the fourth compartment. The *satin moiré* endpapers are gold with a design of vertical ridges.

See colored photos of the binding variations by going to [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) and typing in "Grimm's Fairy Tales Easton Press."

Another Easton Press title, "The Scarlet Letter" [1975], can be found in various binding designs. I personally prefer the binding with a large, 4-7/8-inch "A" on the cover. It's complemented with a background of a gilded frame consisting of three borders, a series of vertical gilded lines, and six beautifully stylized scrolls. Even the spine design is more attractive, which features the book title in Old English typeface in one compartment; the full name of the author in another compartment; as well as lovely design scrolls. Again, go to [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

to see the variations [type in "The Scarlet Letter Easton Press"].

One more . . .

Another interesting variation is the book "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man," [1977]. The preferred binding has a sketch of "the young man" in an oval shaped design on the top cover, surrounded by three decorative oval-designed borders.

The other 1977 binding is simply a design with repeating cloverleaves on the top cover. Two ruled borders surround the cloverleaves. Attractive, but not very exciting.

You can see both binding designs in color at the [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) site. Type "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man Easton Press."

If you are planning to

buy

a leather-bound Easton Press book online, ask the dealer or reseller to describe the binding if you are looking for a specific binding design (if a photo is not shown). Also check on condition, especially the gilded edges. The latter damage easily and they can be scratched or rubbed.

Since Easton Press provided its customers with bookplates as part of its membership program, confirm there is or isn't a bookplate attached to the endpaper (typically on the first pastedown endpaper). Surprisingly, there are dealers or resellers who do not indicate the presence of bookplates -- including those bookplates signed by previous owners of the books. In general, some sellers use a flat statement in their product descriptions, such as "there may be a bookplate in the book." I noted one dealer listing that stated, "Large Easton sticker pasted on the page." Sticker? Page?

If you are

selling

online --such as listing with Amazon, be sure your binding design matches the photo in the product category you've selected. Only then should you place your book in that product category. Otherwise, the buyer of your book might return it because your binding design was not what he or she preferred. Of course, if you are supplying a photo along with your description, you're a lot safer. Maybe.

The Easton Press hardcover books are indeed fine works -- and collectible primarily for their bindings. An increasing number are now out-of-print, so they are sought after by collectors.

The publisher calls each leather-bound book "Collector's Edition." The books highlight *full*

leather bound boards and feature sophisticated hubbed designs (raised ridges) on spines, stamped with accents of 22kt. gold -- a hallmark of fine bookmaking. The pages are textured and shaded, acid-neutral. They are Smyth-sewn into the binding for permanence (not glued).

Endpapers are satin moiré

é

. With few exceptions, all edges gilded. Satin ribbon page markers are bound into the books.

No doubt about it, the leather-bound books look great on bookshelves.

One more point: Easton Press presents a historical perspective of the titles in virtually every book, including a snapshot of the bibliographic details. The information includes when the first edition, first printing was published; if it was first published serially in publications (and which ones); the author's real name (e.g., Charlotte Brontë penned as Currer Bell), etc. Good solid, accurate information for the collector, reseller, and book dealer.

Easton Press leather-bound books are

not

limited editions. Over the years the publisher cranked them out depending on market demand. There are no issue limitations. Titles are re-issued over and over in variant bindings, endpapers, title pages with and without color, etc.

There are many copies of Easton Press leather-bound books in circulation, or beautifully presented in the personal libraries of collectors. The books are not uncommon or scarce.

Many thrift and charities-type outlets get their share of donated Easton Press books, and have been known to undercut the market when they list their copies online. Last year I saw a copy of "The Jungle Books" listed online by a thrift store for \$9.95 in "new condition," surrounded by dealers who were listing the same book and condition in the price range of \$29.00 to \$300. And just like many established dealers, the not-for-profit institutions might list the binding designs in any section of binding offerings, perhaps the incorrect sections. The thrift and charities typically provide scant details about the condition of book offerings ("Nice book. Your purchase helps the poor children in the dirty, broken down, flat-broke,

under-nourished section of shanty town Iowa find a better life." Ahhh, capitalism and the free market at work.

A final note: Most Easton Press books are pretty common and Near Fine copies are listed online for an average of \$25.00, while other more desirable titles reach into the \$200 plus category (e.g., "The Invisible Man"). U.S. presidential titles are favorites of collectors, especially those books written by
late
U.S. Presidents.

Whether you are buying or selling Easton Press books, look before you leap.

R. Siedlecki Vintage Books is located in Roswell, Georgia, a suburb of Atlanta. It was established in 1991. The primarily online-based business offers a wide range of interesting vintage books and ephemera, with a concentration on Greater Cleveland and Ohio, along with historical books covering cities, towns, and states in the U.S. A. You can see a selection of Siedlecki's books for sale at www.amazon.com/shops/rs-vb. Contact: siedl@bellsouth.net

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