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Edith Wharton

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Edith Wharton : The House of Mirth before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The House of Mirth:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Ironies aboundingBy Suzanne M. YuskiwHints of Austen and Thomas Hardy throughout Wharton's early novel of manners, morals and the vacuous life of the filthy rich. Although she was party to that life, she looks at her compatriots with a sardonic eye. Really enjoyed most of this and love the quality of the writing. It's a good summer read.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Raised to be the beautiful wife of a gentleman of her equalBy MimaA first time Edith Wharton reader. I first read Ethan Frome and then The House of Mirth. I was impressed by her prose and vivid descriptions of the high society circle she was a part of. Raised to be the beautiful wife of a gentleman of her equal, poor Lily didn't have a chance left out of this circle. Both Ethan Frome and The House of Mirth are well worth reading but soooo depressing!0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great and tragic life and love storyBy Coco LeRouxExcellent writing and story tragic and

telling of life's pit falls and the traps we fall into in order to be accepted.

The House of MirthByEdith WhartonThe House of Mirth (1905), a novel by Edith Wharton (1862-1937), tells the story of Lily Bart, a well-born but impoverished woman belonging to New York City's high society around the turn of the last century. Wharton creates a portrait of a stunning beauty who, though raised and educated to marry well both socially and economically, is reaching her 29th year, an age when her youthful blush is drawing to a close and her marital prospects are becoming ever more limited. The House of Mirth traces Lily's slow two-year social descent from privilege to a tragically lonely existence on the margins of society. Wharton uses Lily as an attack on "an irresponsible, grasping and morally corrupt upper class." Before publication as a book on October 14, 1905, The House of Mirth was serialized in Scribner's Magazine beginning in January 1905. It attracted a readership among housewives and businessmen alike. Charles Scribner wrote Edith in November 1905 that the novel was showing "the most rapid sale of any book ever published by Scribner." By the end of December sales had reached 140,000 copies. Edith's royalties were valued at more than half a million dollars in today's currency. The commercial and critical success of The House of Mirth solidified Wharton's reputation as a major novelist.

.com "The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth," warns Ecclesiastes 7:4, and so does the novel by Edith Wharton that takes its title from this call to heed. New York at the turn of the century was a time of opulence and frivolity for those who could afford it. But for those who couldn't and yet wanted desperately to keep up with the whirlwind, like Wharton's charming Lily Bart, it was something else altogether: a gilded cage rather than the Gilded Age. One of Wharton's earliest descriptions of her heroine, in the library of her bachelor friend and sometime suitor Lawrence Selden, indicates that she appears "as though she were a captured dryad subdued to the conventions of the drawing room." Indeed, herein lies Lily's problem. She has, we're told, "been brought up to be ornamental," and yet her spirit is larger than what this ancillary role requires. By today's standards she would be nothing more than a mild rebel, but in the era into which Wharton drops her unmercifully, this tiny spark of character, combined with numerous assaults by vicious society women and bad luck, ultimately renders Lily persona non grata. Her own ambivalence about her position serves to open the door to disaster: several times she is on the verge of "good" marriage and squanders it at the last moment, unwilling to play by the rules of a society that produces, as she calls them, "poor, miserable, marriageable girls. Lily's rather violent tumble down the social ladder provides a thumbnail sketch of the general injustices of the upper classes (which, incidentally, Wharton never quite manages to condemn entirely, clearly believing that such life is cruel but without alternative). From her start as a beautiful woman at the height of her powers to her sad finale as a recently fired milliner's assistant addicted to sleeping drugs, Lily Bart is heroic, not least for her final admission of her own role in her downfall. "Once--twice--you gave me the chance to escape from my life and I refused it: refused it because I was a coward," she tells Selden as the book draws to a close. All manner of hideous socialite beasts--some of whose treatment by Wharton, such as the token social-climbing Jew, Simon Rosedale, date the book unfortunately--wander through the novel while Lily plummets. As her tale winds down to nothing more than the remnants of social grace and cold hard cash, it's hard not to agree with Lily's own assessment of herself: "I have tried hard--but life is difficult, and I am a very useless person. I can hardly be said to have an independent existence. I was just a screw or a cog in the great machine I called life, and when I dropped out of it I found I was of no use anywhere else." Nevertheless, it's even harder not to believe that she deserved better, which is why The House of Mirth remains so timely and so vital in spite of its crushing end and its unflattering portrait of what life offers up. --Melanie RehakFrom Library JournalWharton's account of the ill-fated life of Lily Bart receives a perfunctory treatment in this audio program. It is New York in the early 20th century; Lily loves Lawrence Selden, but he sees her as a fortune hunter, with tragic consequences. The author excels at delineating the ways money, romance, and social standing intertwine in the society of the time. Included is a lengthy introduction by Wharton biographer R.W.B. Lewis that sets the work in the context of the writer's life and career. Casual listeners may consider the preface too long and scholarly, and those coming to the novel for the first time may be put off by learning the outcome and by hearing Lewis's uncertainty about whether it is a masterpiece. Anna Fields handles the narration adequately but strains to create masculine voices and makes most of the women too flighty. As a result, the characters seem more trivial than Wharton intended. Not recommended. Michael Adams, CUNY Graduate Ctr. Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. A tragedy of our modern life, in which the relentlessness of what men used to call Fate and esteem. is as vividly set forth as ever it was by Aeschylus or Shakespeare. The New York TimesUniquely authentic among American novels of manners. Louis AuchinclossBrilliant.[Lily Bart] is a grand tragic heroine, fit to take center stage with Manon or Emma Bovary, Gwendolen Harleth or Tess of the D'Urbervilles, Anna Karenina or Isabel Archer. Hermione Lee