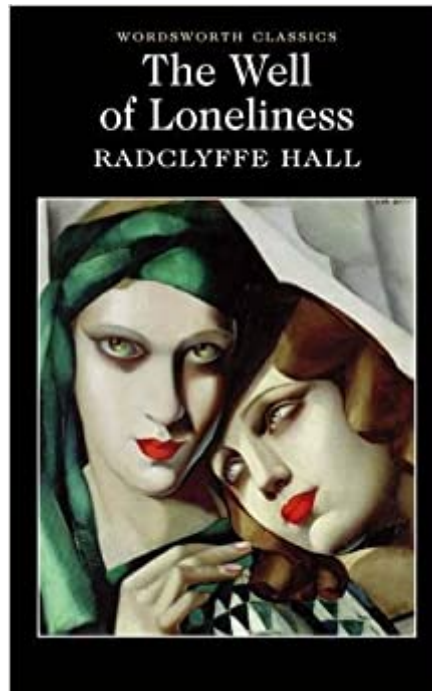


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The Well Of Loneliness (Wordsworth Classics)



Synopsis

'As a man loved a woman, that was how I loved...It was good, good, good...' Stephen is an ideal child of aristocratic parents - a fencer, a horse rider and a keen scholar. Stephen grows to be a war hero, a bestselling writer and a loyal, protective lover. But Stephen is a woman, and her lovers are women. As her ambitions drive her, and society confines her, Stephen is forced into desperate actions. *The Well of Loneliness* was banned for obscenity when published in 1928. It became an international bestseller, and for decades was the single most famous lesbian novel. It has influenced how love between women is understood, for the twentieth century and beyond.

Book Information

Paperback: 448 pages

Publisher: Wordsworth Editions Ltd (March 19, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 184022455X

ISBN-13: 978-1840224559

Product Dimensions: 4.9 x 1 x 7.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 92 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #31,973 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #111 in [Books > Gay & Lesbian > Literature & Fiction > Fiction > Lesbian](#) #220 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Criticism & Theory](#) #904 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > Contemporary](#)

Customer Reviews

Hall (1880-1943) was legendary in her own time--or infamous, some might say--for her fifth novel, *The Well of Loneliness* (1928). The book was banned for obscenity because its main character is a lesbian, and it subsequently became a notorious best-seller, thrusting Hall into a literary rogues' gallery of fame. Cline uses previously unexplored material to create a biography of the now largely forgotten author that portrays the dense interrelationship of her writings, her childhood, and her friends and loves. Hall called herself by three names: Marguerite, the name with which she had been christened and which she hated, given as it was by the mother she despised; John, her chosen name, which she used among her associates; and Radclyffe, her pen name. The three often enigmatic selves these names indicated formed her public and private personae. The roots giving rise to her international lesbian best-seller are traceable to her early adolescent loves as well as her affairs with married sculptor Una Troubridge and many others--matters that Cline presents in a lively

and readable style. Whitney Scott --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

The Well of Loneliness is a path-breaking novel. Published by Radclyffe Hall herself in 1928, it was immediately banned in Britain due to its lesbian theme and was allowed in the United States only after a long court battle. Once it was available, The Well of Loneliness sold more than 20,000 copies its first year and paved the way for other works with lesbian themes. The novel concerns a girl born into a wealthy English family at the turn of the century and named Stephen by her father who desperately wanted a boy. Practically from birth, Stephen is described as different, yet while Radclyffe Hall delivers the powerful message that lesbianism is natural, she also asks the reader to have pity on Stephen Gordon, for, along with the popular psychoanalysts of her day, Radclyffe Hall describes lesbianism as an inversion. The terrible mark of Cain" compels Stephen to forsake the woman she loves to protect her from a life of ostracism. This message, along with Radclyffe Hall's portrayal of lesbians in stereotypical butch& and femme roles, caused the book to be written off by feminists in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In addition, many readers today may find the language long-winded and the characters one-dimensional, with the exception of the thinly-veiled portrait of the author as Stephen Gordon. Nonetheless, The Well of Loneliness is worth reading because it shattered the silence of oppression and conveys a message about homophobia and internalized shame relevant to lesbians even today. For great reviews of books for girls, --j

I was a young teen the first time I read "The Well of Loneliness", by Radcliff Hall. Soon after I discovered that "Radcliff Hall" was a woman who, due to the times in which she lived, wrote this novel using a male name rather than her own, as I understand, to give it credibility. Even so, this was a first of it's kind writing, as it's subject matter was something that was considered to be wrong; sick even. Not a topic to be mentioned, certainly not to be written about. I believe this book was the first of it's kind. It addressed the topic of lesbianism. She addressed it as it is, or certainly was in that day, and for many more years to come. The lifestyle was experienced by an individual whose sexuality was developing normally, but whose feelings were for the same gender as her own. I would be at a loss to express the profound confusion this would create, and did cause this character. Naturally, "science" knew this predicament existed and perhaps as one's experience grew, lay people, knew it existed, but it was considered to be both unusual and grotesquely abnormal. This lifestyle was thought actually un-Godly. This because of what many now know to be mistranslated references to homosexuality in The Bible. This incredible novel takes us through the life and developement of a woman, from childhood through womanhood, who struggles with

powerful feelings of which she cannot, in any context of which she is familiar, find a way in which they make sense. For years she thinks she is "the only one". This is a novel written with passion, insight and truth; with an intimate understanding of what it is to be something that is very different from the presentation of oneself that must be presented to others. Even others who love and respect her, as she knows even they would likely turn their back on her if they knew her truth. This novel allowed me to see this woman's journey. It allowed me to understand that all these feelings and thoughts that I was experiencing, when indeed experienced by many. I was not alone. I would recommend this book to those who are searching, and who find themselves confused and frightened about who they think they may be.

Give this story time to develop. Do not give up in the first one hundred pages. There is a timeless story of inner understanding in a world that does not want to have anything to do with a person's truth. The author uses a very strong command of Christian symbolism to express the shades of tragedy in a most interesting metaphor to life. It is clear that the character is an outcast both by society and the resulting self-loathing. The author does express hope that this natural human ability to love will be allowed in the future. Does love need to be allowed? This was not a page turning read for me; however, I did find myself reflecting on our cultural tolerances on the groups cast aside due to beliefs, race, sex, nationality, education etc... It is sad that today this book finds a very strong thread of relevant issues.

I read this as a part of a year long book reading challenge; "The Well of Loneliness" had been banned so naturally I wanted to see why! It is widely accepted as a thinly-veiled autobiography of the lesbian writer Radclyffe Hall. The protagonist, Stephen, who is given a masculine name because her parents wanted a boy, grows up with masculine proclivities in sport, and love as well. Her wealthy parents were indulgent when she was young but her mother gradually withdraws as Stephen becomes more enigmatic to the traditionally feminine mother, a celebrated beauty, while her father begins to understand what drives his daughter's eccentric personality. A tree branch falls on him before he makes up his mind to divulge to Stephen's mother what he suspects then, with his last gasp, tries to vindicate his daughter but dies. Lonely without her father's mature companionship and increasingly estranged from her mother, Stephen becomes embroiled in a disastrous affair with the wife of a neighbor. When the truth explodes, Stephen is forced to leave her childhood home with orders from her mother to behave as if nothing is wrong and to make regular pilgrimages back to Morton to that end which results in little more than painful recollections for all concerned.

Throughout this time, Stephen's governess-turned-companion, "Puddle" a secret lesbian herself and only too aware of what Stephen is suffering, agonizes privately whether she should speak up or remain silent about the condition of being an "invert." First living in London and becoming a successful author, then settling in Paris to seek her muse, life is disrupted by WWI. Stephen, as well as many other Inverts, finds they are welcome to serve their country as ambulance drivers and do so with distinction. Stephen finds Mary during this time as they suffer the tragedies of wartime then eventually return to Stephen's house in Paris to set up housekeeping together, becoming involved in the Paris nightlife of similarly shunned "others." Mary is dissatisfied with being outcast but is unwilling to give up her love for Stephen. Stephen loves Mary fiercely but suffers because she cannot legitimize her love for Mary in the eyes of the world. A young man who had unsuccessfully courted Stephen in her youth shows up in Paris, understanding of the truth, and becomes a welcome confidante once again. However, after months of conviviality, Martin confides in Stephen that he is in love with Mary and thinks Mary is fond of him. An emotional and intellectual duel follows between these two honorable lovers in which Stephen ultimately concedes the field to Martin, recognizing that only a marriage between a man and a woman affords Mary the protection she craves. Throughout the book, Stephen wonders why God would make something unworthy of love, why society has to be so unforgiving, and why she was made the way she was. The legal and social ramifications of being different are examined from various angles with hope for future generations the constant theme. (For the record, God made you so He loves you!) From a technical standpoint, this book is well-written, well-paced, and absorbing. The characters are drawn with a fine eye for detail and examples of the author's own good heart are found in dialogue with the animals, of all things! One can imagine Stephen leaning her head against the horse Raftery, as she murmurs the kind of nothings we all say to our beloved pets. As a straight reader, I saw life from a different perspective through Radclyffe's eyes, and had to ask myself why I still resisted the idea of same-sex marriage. It is making me think and isn't that purpose of excellent literature?

A sad but beautiful book. Had read it many years ago and loved it; found it just as good on my second read.

We gays, lesbians, bisexuals, may live openly today, but it wasn't always so. Here is a representation of what life was like for some like us in generations past. We may not fully understand their feelings, beliefs, actions, and reactions. We surely find occasionally offensive some of the social assumptions of the era. But were it not for them, their courage, their fears, their foibles,

their struggles, we would not be where we are today. I did not find this the most comfortable book to read, but I highly recommend it as a must-read for those of us enjoying a comfortable "inverted" lifestyle today.

I've been reading about this book for years, and it's so cool to get the "real thing"

A decent read

Never got this book and was disappointed. Had to spend much more for a newer publication but I wanted the older print

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