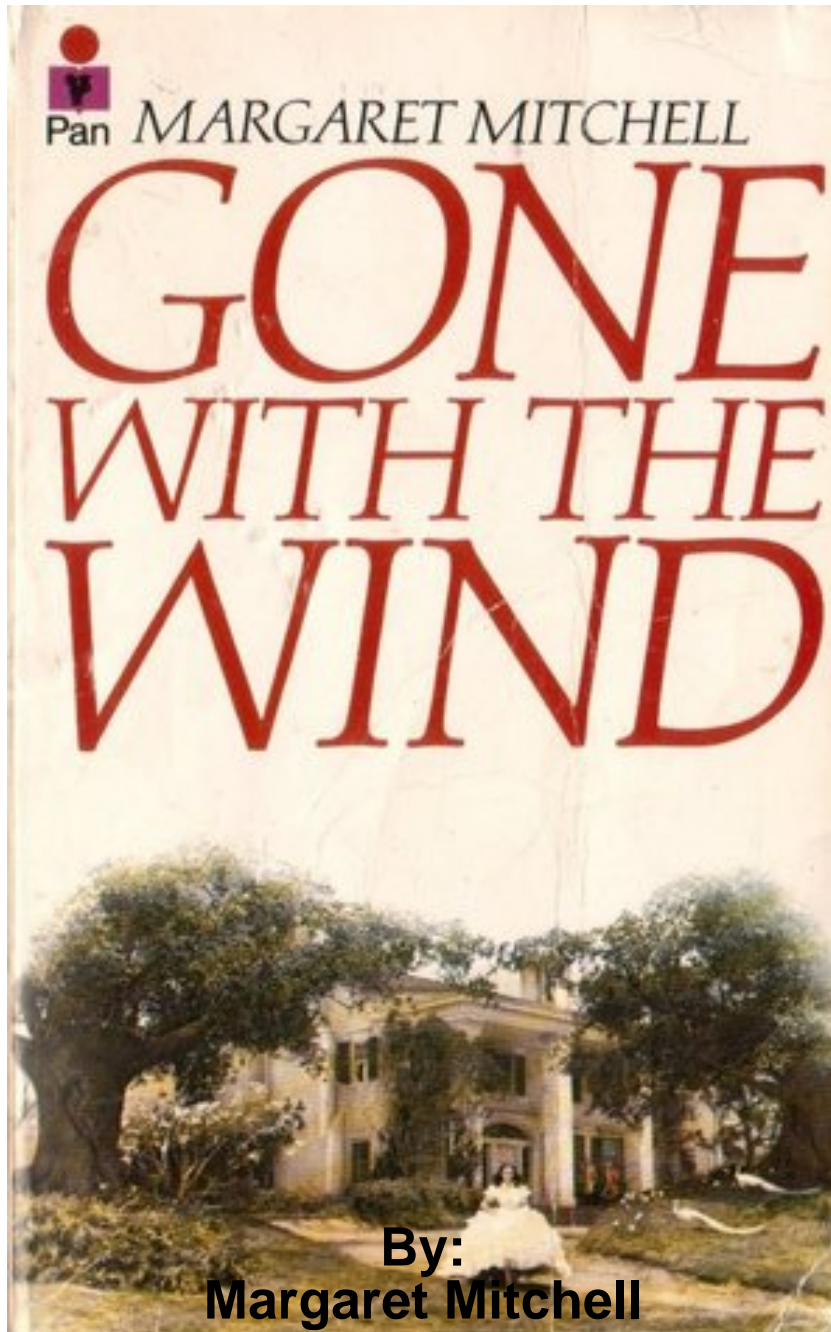


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## What people Say:

### Annalisa

It takes guts to make your main character spoiled, selfish, and stupid, someone without any redeeming qualities, and write an epic novel about her. But it works for two reasons. First of all you wait for justice to fall its merciless blow with one of the most recognized lines in cinema ("frankly my dear, I don't give a damn"), but you end with a broken and somewhat repentant character and you can't be pitiless. Secondly, if you were going to parallel the beautiful, affluent, lazy, spirited South

It takes guts to make your main character spoiled, selfish, and stupid, someone without any redeeming qualities, and write an epic novel about her. But it works for two reasons. First of all you wait for justice to fall its merciless blow with one of the most recognized lines in cinema ("frankly my dear, I don't give a damn"), but you end with a broken and somewhat repentant character and you can't be pitiless. Secondly, if you were going to parallel the beautiful, affluent, lazy, spirited South being conquered by the intellectual, industrious North, what better way to do that than with characters who embody those characteristics? You come to feel a level of sadness that the South and Scarlett lost their war and hope that they will rebuild.

I enjoyed the picture of pre-war South outside of what you learn in history class approved by the nation that won the war. If the South had won, we would have an entirely different picture painted. A story of lush lands and prosperity abounding with chivalry and gentility by a (too) passionate people. If you visit the South today, you can see that all these generations later the wounds of the war and the regret at losing the way of life are still fresh. But if it had not been the civil war, it would have been by other means that the lazy sprawled out way of life would have been conquered by our efficient, compact, modern lives.

I enjoyed the picture of plantations that did not abuse slaves to the extent that you read about in many memoirs. There was still a disrespect in that they viewed "darkies" as ignorant and childish and worthy of being owned, but there were those who cared for those in their trust. And the North who came down riling up the lowest of the slaves to flip the oppression did not want any contact with a race they feared. Prejudice takes many faces. Slavery is such an important part of American history, but I don't know that I agree with the format in which it is taught (at least the way it was taught to me). We take young, tolerant children and feed them stories of racism and abuse and then tell them the world is naturally prejudice (that they are prejudice) so don't be. White children start feeling awkward and aware and black children start feeling mistreated and aware. We manage to teach children about Indian and Holocaust history without the same enthusiasm to end racism by breeding racism. There has to be a better way. But I digress.

I also enjoyed Mitchell showing the volatile formula in which the KKK was aroused, that it wasn't just a disdain for free darkies but a need to protect their women and children from the rash anger now imposed on them through this new regime. Not that there are any redeeming qualities in the KKK, or

even the Southern rash justice by pistol shot to curb wounded pride, but it was interesting to learn the wider circumstances in which it arose. The entire picture of the Southern perspective from the hierarchy of slaves to the disdain of the reconstruction was enlightening. The post-war difficulties, that sometimes it's harder to survive than die, were some of my favorite epiphanies of the story. What everyone in the South went through, both white and black, after everything was deconstructed and they didn't know how to rebuild. It wasn't just about freeing slaves but about rebuilding an entire way of life and sometimes change, even good change, can be this scary and destructive.

My one complaint about the book was at times the description was lengthy. I'd get a grasp for the emotions of Scarlett that are supposed to describe the emotions of all Southerners or the description of the land at Tara as a representation of the rich red soil all Southerners love and then Mitchell would go on for paragraphs or pages rehashing that feeling to pull the most emotion out of you. It worked, but sometimes I think she could have done so in fewer words.

I view Scarlett as a representation of the South in which she loved. She did not care from whence the wealth came or believed that it would ever end. Because she was rich and important, she would conquer. As the Yankees attempted to rebuild the South, fresh in their embitterment at a war they did not want to fight, you can both see their reasoning and feel for the Southerners who were licked and then stomped on in their attempts to gain back of their life. You see that in Scarlett. On one hand you don't pity her and think she needs a lesson in poverty and on the other hand you want her to survive. Either she can lie down and cling to her old ways or she can debase herself and rebuild. Survival, not morality, is her strongest drive.

Oh Scarlett. We all know people like her. People who unscrupulously use their womanly charms to get ahead and carry a deep disdain for those bound by concepts of kindness, morals, or intelligence and most especially for those who see them for what they are instead of being manipulated. People who care for nobody but themselves and who find enjoyment in life not in what they have, but in conquering the unattainable that is only desirable because it is out of reach. I loved how Mitchell showed Scarlett's decline from a religious albeit not believing girl who allowed her rationalization and avoidance to carry her from one sin to the next of intensifying degree. An excellent portrait of the degradation of character.

Initially I thought she was the only character who wasn't growing, actually digressing. But by the end she does grow up. In no regard is this greater than in her eventual desire to be a mother. Turning from her ravenous post-war desire to survive to her acceptance of life and the people around her as the way they are, eventually Scarlett grows into the person she was meant to be. As did the South. Proudful and resentful, eventually they had to accept that they lost the war and take what was given them and try to make it work.

Scarlett realizes that Melanie is not the weak, cowardly girl she always assumed but the most courageous character in the book and one who gets her means by influence and persuasion instead of Scarlett's uncivil ways. It is Melly, not Scarlett, who could get anything she desires and her heart is not her weakness but her greatest strength. Finally Scarlett values the importance of love and sees that it does not make one weak but deep to possess it. OK, I won't go that far. She's not

intelligent enough to analyze love, but she grows up enough to fall for it anyway, to realize she needs people.

## Eve Brown

I honestly do not know whether to give this book 5 stars for being one of the most completely engrossing, shocking, and emotionally absorbing pieces of literature ever written, or to give it 0 stars for being the most tragic, unendingly upsetting, disturbing book I've ever read. I read the last 50 pages or so literally with my mouth wide open, unable to believe that it was really going to be THAT tragically sad. When I finally finished, I walked downstairs in a daze, handed the book to my husband

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UPDATE: After about a week, I have decided to give this book a 5, because any piece of fiction that can have that strong an effect on a reader deserves the highest ranking possible! Besides, I've found that, no matter how tragic and sometimes unlikeable the characters were, I am still thinking about them days after I finished reading. I almost miss them! They have truly come alive for me. Besides, who doesn't love a good emotional roller coaster every once in a while?!

## Brina

One of my reading themes for 2016 is reading at least ten classic books. It seems only fitting that on the Fourth of July I completed Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind*, an epic masterpiece that many view as the definitive great American novel.

I feel that the two halves of the book mirror the southern United States before and after the Civil War. The first half of the book occurs primarily at Tara Plantation. We meet our main protagonist Scarlett O'Hara, the belle of the south, who epitomizes

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Next, there is the fated barbecue at neighboring Twelve Oaks plantation. We meet mainstays Ashley and Melanie Wilkes who are to be married. Scarlett grew up with Ashley and desires him yet this is a teenage fantasy, unfortunately one that will plague her for the rest of her life. Witnessing her declaration of love for Ashley is the mysterious Rhett Butler, an unreceived gentleman with a past. Instantly smitten with Scarlett's looks and personality, he begins a lifelong quest to have her as his own. And then the Great War hits and shatters all these dreams.

Scarlett reduced to nothing rebuilds. She is a modern woman who goes into business despite an entire city of Atlanta giving her nasty looks. She does this at the cost of her children's upbringing so she can rebuild Tara and her Atlanta life from the rubble of the war. Although many people in their reviews state that they dislike Scarlett and her selfish motives, I view her character with determination as she tried to better her place in society in order to leave her children with more than she started with. Mitchell is writing from a 20th century perspective and had witnessed the modern woman and inserts some of these modern traits into Scarlett. Combine that with her Irish blood, and we have one of the most determined protagonists of all time.

Of course as in any epic, we have a sketch of the time period. I learned much about the reconstruction south because growing up in the north, we only had what was in the history books. I knew the basics but not the intimate look at how southerners rebuilt following the war. There were two views to the new south- there was Ashley Wilkes who pined for Twelve Oaks and the way of life before the war and Rhett Butler who symbolizes the modern south and how Atlanta and the south rose again. The second half of the book focuses on these two men and how they coped and

succeeded in reconstruction, yet it all came back to Scarlett and which of the two paths she would choose, which man's dreams she would decide to follow.

Behind Scarlett, Rhett, and Ashley and their dreams, we have Melanie Wilkes. She was the only character who knew all the principal players for who they were, and held them together through good times and bad. Whereas Scarlett was the new south, the new woman, Melanie was the south and the picture of the south I have always had- a strong woman, rallying soldiers, rallying for every cause after reconstruction, holding together an entire city, selfless. Even Scarlett with all her selfishness turned to Melanie in times of greatest need, even though Melanie is the one who viewed Scarlett as the pillar of strength. And yet, both women were strength, Melanie in her antiquated ways and Scarlett as the new woman who would bring this country forward while still remembering Tara, where she came from.

As I finish this epic on America's birthday I feel a sadness as I leave behind Mitchell's well drawn characters that earned her a Pulitzer Prize 80 years ago. Scarlett's determination, Rhett's swarthy brashness, Ashley's love of time gone by, Melanie's heart. I look forward to seeing the epic film for the first time and witnessing Scarlett and Rhett and Tara on screen. I am glad I let myself be drawn into this slice of Americana from bygone eras, and believe that every American should attempt to read Mitchell's masterpiece at least once in their lives.

## Fabian

I've said it some time ago: GWTW the novel is like watching the ten hour director's cut of GWTW the movie! Hell yeah!!! All the memorable scenes are there, & the spotlight romance is considerably widened in scope, as is the sturdy social studies lesson on the almighty American Civil War. I mean, everyone has the basic idea correct: the South took a tremendous thrashing. But having the loser's POV take the forefront, even to the extent of exalting the KKK-- this, more than Scarlett O'Hara's infamous bitchiness but overall fierceness as the antihero of this fantastic tale-- is what I fell in love with. The stars all aligned and for the first time in a long time the general reading audience had it correct. GWTW is a remarkable, unique reading experience.

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A reader simply isn't one unless he or she has faced a behemoth like this one. This, "The Odyssey," "The 1001 Arabian Nights," "Don Quixote," "Lord of the Rings"... are all musts. All epic & so awesome, THE primordial blockbusters. You have enough time to live with the book, to form a relationship with it, to think about your future together... (It becomes an integral part of yourself!)

Now, what do we get on this journey that is sadly missing in its technicolored, titanic doppelganger? The atrocities shown here of the war are not apt for a rated G film.

The following questions are thoroughly answered... (mild SPOILER ALERT!) In what way did Gerald O'Hara gain ownership of Tara? What invisible connection exists between women and horses? How did the siege of Atlanta take place? Why Atlanta? What is Southern hospitality, really? (Priceless is the mentioning of several ostentatious Atlanta parties with only the Yankee army 22 miles away!! Priceless is the POV of the woman that stayed behind while all men are off to war!! Priceless the interconnections between folks [of course the world population was nil back then!]) And, How has the idea of masculinity changed from the 19th century? What is true sisterhood? What's Post-traumatic stress syndrome?

The townships are fully described. GWTW has many protagonists, as they all add authenticity to the incredibly narrative. If there ever existed a valentine for a city in the elusive form of an epic historical romance, then it is this, for Atlanta! There are additional love stories which parallel Rhett's and Scarlett's & several romantic dates between the central lovers. Everyone, it seems, has fallen in love, which adds the hues of Romanticism to the epic Southern Myth. Too, there is sympathy for the devil, scorn for the overly dandified Yankees (They desecrated graves! Raped, and pillaged!), amazement at the aftereffects of the Civil War, including Reconstruction (which takes up many more pages than the war itself!).

Missing from the silver screen? The characters of Wade and Ella, Scarlett's first- and second-borns. They do nothing but highlight the main character's flaws and selfishness. Frank Kennedy, also known as Mr. Scarlett O'Hara, the Second. And Will Benteen, the overseer at Tara would be one too many males within Scarlett's (Vivien Leigh's) periphery on film. Also: Scarlett almost getting attacked and raped; GWTW's racy social commentary, all of the men partaking in early KKK activities. I will admit, GWTW is gee-wow! oh-so feminist... but also downright racist!

Scarlett's consciousness evolves. She turns from spoiled brat teen to fiery, materialistic bitch!! In her brain is the constant battle to get Ashley Wilkes, to get Tara. It is only here that I perceive similarities to "Twilight": yearnings & adolescent ambivalence. These things, it seems, never change. Also, that Gotterdammerung, or, the dusk of the gods, the end of civilization, is apt to occur in our times, and soon: this is a prophecy waiting to be fulfilled!

The British have "Wuthering Heights," "Pride and Prejudice"; We got "Gone With the Wind", an epic so incredible, so full of wuthering heights and perplexing downfalls, so jam packed with southern pride and arrogance, of prejudice and passion, that it is simply sad that its sole detriment is (not its length, nor its melodrama, but) its racist edge. GWTW is the s\*\*t in many

respects, but it is the dialogue between the star-crossed lovers (positively Wilde in its cleverness, in its tongue-in-cheekness) which elevates it to a plane higher than its sturdy, more lauded colleagues. Unlike that once-glorious South in the war, with "Gone With the Wind" you, the reader, will not lose...!

## Nicko

So much has been said in praise of this book it feels redundant to add more. In terms of the slave-holding society, the film actually toned-down the pro-South view of Reconstruction (Scarlett's second husband joined the KKK in the book) and Mammy remains probably one of the most fully-developed and likeable African-American characters from 1930 you'll read.

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Rhett Butler is the consummate alpha male. This book is definitely the timeless classic reputation it has earned, and though at times it seemed like the longest book ever, it is all worth it in the end. It touches on many misunderstood aspects of the civil war and its afterwords. What many people do not realize is how horrible it really was for Southerners after the war, mostly because they cannot get past the racism of the times (which it wasn't as if the North was full of equality and peace, either). If you can accept the times for what they were, you will see how well this book was written. I appreciate it for the well built characters, smooth flow, and albeit romanticized- depiction of the Antebellum South.

As far as being politically incorrect or the modern charges that the book is "racist," remember that this book was written in the 1930s. Not to mention, the time period is the Civil War era! To be completely unracist would not have depicted the era correctly. As if it represents anything more than the way people thought when it was made. Of course, it's racist. America is and has been a racist society since the beginning. This book mirrors the opinions held by the people alive and working at the time, no more and certainly no less. Have opinions changed since then? Of course, as society evolves so does the writing. All this aside, the character of "Mammy" is one of the most likeable and respected characters in the book. Rhett Butler treats her very well, and tries to win her approval. She's the one person throughout the novel who sees through everyone's follies and foibles,

but remains forgiving of them anyway. There's a reason this book won so many awards and still endures! It is a timeless classic that everyone should enjoy and read in context.