



The Lady of the Lake

Walter Scott

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A kindly heart had brave Fitz-James; Fast poured his eyes at pity's claims, And now, with mingled grief and ire, He saw the murdered maid expire. "God, in my need, be my relief, As I wreak this on yonder Chief!" - from The Lady of the Lake Wildly successful with readers and critics on both sides of the Atlantic when it was first published in 1810, this is Scott's renowned romantic poem about love and honor amidst a bitter rivalry between King James V and the powerful Douglas clan of the Scottish Highlands. This revised edition, published in 1899, features an extensive introduction that places Scott and his writings in historical and literary context, as well as explanatory notes, study guides, and suggested selections for class or book-group readings. Scottish novelist and poet SIR WALTER SCOTT (1771-1832), a literary hero of his native land, turned to writing only when his law practice and printing business foundered. Among his most beloved works are Rob Roy (1818), and Ivanhoe (1820). American writer WILLIAM VAUGHN MOODY (1869-1910) served as co-editor of the Harvard Monthly and assistant professor of English at the University of Chicago. He authored several verse plays, books of poetry, and histories and criticisms of English literature.

The Lady of the Lake Details

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From Reader Review The Lady of the Lake for online ebook

Anthony Mosakowski says

My main reason for choosing to read this book is that it is the source for the original German text (translated) for Schubert's Ave Maria. I also knew that it was a very influential work in the 19th century. So I was ready to really enjoy reading it. Unfortunately the experience fell short of my expectations. I generally appreciate poetry of all sorts and literature of bygone days. I found this particular poem difficult to follow, difficult to read in general. I needed to reread large chunks just to get a clue about what was going on. I didn't find the characters particularly admirable or interesting. The story opens with James Fitz-James riding his horse so far and fast that it dies of exhaustion, not exactly a sympathetic personality. Having read it once and now having a better idea of the characters and their relationships, I may come back to it in the future. As another reviewer suggested, I will most likely go with a well-annotated edition rather than the free ebook I chose.

Chandra says

The Lady of the Lake is a narrative poem set in the Trossachs region of Scotland. There are three main plots going at once: the constant war between the high and lowland Scots (the "Gaels" and "Saxons"), a battle between three men to win the heart of the young and alluring Ellen Douglas, and the feud and eventual rapprochement that occurs between James V (cunningly disguised and going by the alias James Fitz-James) and James Douglas. This is the first of Scott's work I've read and I'm already a huge fan. The Lady of the Lake is beautiful. Scott's emotive description is so eloquently written; he truly captures the Highlands in all its beauty. I thoroughly enjoyed reading this poem and look forward to more of Scott's work.

"So wondrous wild, the whole might seem
The scenery of a fairy dream."

Rebecca says

I love the sound of poetry like this, but I definitely feel like I'm not entirely sure what happened.

Anna says

I bought this 1919 edition at an antique store in Boothbay Harbour, ME. It's on my shelf for life even if I never finish it!

I FINALLY finished it! The beginning is very confusing with introducing a lot of characters at once and trying to figure out who's talking and who's who. But towards the end, it all started to fall into place and get exciting with war, love, politics, and the most wonderful descriptions. I think if I went back to read it again I would enjoy it doubly since I now can follow along the plot better.

What talent to tell a whole story in 8 count lines that rhyme!

Steven Walle says

This is a beautiful romantic poem in the midst of the rivalry of James the fifth and the Clan of Douglas in Scotland. It was originally printed in 1810. In this version there are explanatory notes and a wonderful introduction which explains the times in which this was written to better understand the poem.

I recommend all of Walter Scott's books but especially this one.

Enjoy and Be Blessed.

Diamond

Elisa Hordon says

A wonderful classic I always enjoy re-reading

Sherrill says

THIS WAS SUPPOSED TO BE THE TRUE STORY OF THE LOVES OF SIR WALTER SCOTT. HE DID HAVE A N UNHAPPY LIFE WHEN HE GAVE HIS HEART TO A WOMAN WHO DID NOT APPRECIATE HIS POETIC SPIRIT OR HIS INSPIRATION IN HIS LIFE. HE ENDED UP WITH CHARLOTTE CARPENTER WHO HE COMES TO LOVE AS MUCH AS WILHELMINA. HE FINDS IN HER A COMPANION THAT HE ALWAYS WANTED. I LIKED THIS BOOK AND IT WAS INFORMATIVE AND WHEN HE WALKS ALONG HADIRANS WALL LAND TEACHES MISS CARPENTER ABOUT ALL OF THE HISTORY OF SCOTLAND.

pietastic says

Well, to say "I read this" is being a little kind to myself. It is true that my eyes passed over all of the words, but I have never had a head for poetry and my comprehension of the poem is seriously lacking. Most of the time I had no idea what was going on and what little I understood was aided by the synopsis of each canto on wikipedia. I have discovered a major lack within my own literary understanding and hope one day to correct it, at which point I will try and read this again. And maybe then I will rate it.

From what I did comprehend, it was not my favourite tale, nor what I expected in the least. (Of course, when I purchased the vintage book that said "Lady of the Lake" I knew nothing of it and was indeed expecting something more Arthurian.) The actual 'lady' does not seem to be a very large part of the story - it being more about war and treason. And the cast of characters seems immense, like trying to follow game of thrones characters.

Poetically, I think the endless couplets are what primarily inhibited my comprehension. They felt too sing-song which caused my brain to settle into the rhythm, ignoring any substance. And many of the rhymes were forced or in spelling only (some, perhaps accounted for by accent, but not all, I'm sure). I read much of it

aloud to stay focused and the phrases felt awkward and often made me feel like I was on a third grade reading level. (I've always counted cold readings as one of my strong suits, so that was a new feeling.) The sections where he altered the metre and rhyme pattern were refreshing and so much easier for me to follow.

Jessica Harn says

Painfully and beautifully written, Scott draws the reader into the wild highlands of Scottish folklore

Red says

Sweet dreams are made of this

Liesl de Swardt says

Excellent. I love his work

Nikki Nielsen says

I found the copy of this book that I have under a floor board in our barn. The copyright is 1882 and there are notes written all through it in an old-style cursive from a student that was apparently studying the book at school.

I love the description .. each separate sonnet or poem takes you to new surroundings, and when I'm not pre-occupied with other thoughts while reading these, I find myself feeling the emotions described. I read this to my children at bed time to calm them down. Here's a sample from Canto 1; the setting is in the vicinity of Loch Katrine, in the Western Highlands of Perthshire.

The Lady of the Lake

Canto 1

XXXV.

The wild rose, eglantine, and broom
Wasted around their rich perfume;
The birch-trees wept in fragrant balm;
The aspens slept beneath the calm;
The silver light, with quivering glance,
Played on the water's still expanse,-
Wild were the heart whose passion's sway
Could rage beneath the sober ray!
He felt its calm, that warrior guest,
While thus he communed with his breast:

'Why is it, at each turn I trace
Some memory of that exiled race"
Can I not mountain maiden spy,
But she must bear the Douglas eye?
Can I not view a Highland brand,
But it must match the Douglas hand?
Can I not frame a fevered dream,
But still the Douglas is the theme?
I'll dream no more, by manly mind
Not even in sleep is will resigned.
My midnight orisons said o'er,
I'll turn to rest, and dream no more.'
His midnight orisons he told,
A prayer with every bead of gold,
Consigned to heaven his cares and woes,
And sunk in undisturbed repose,
Until the heath-cock shrilly crew,
And morning dawned on Benbenue.

I also love the battle scenes that give such description that I feel my heart beat fast and my hands sweat like I am being hunted.

Jessica says

I understand Sir Walter Scott's mastery of rhyming his poetry, but one of the things I don't understand is what exactly is going on.

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I went into this epic poem with a sense of the fantastical, I thought it would be magical and adventurous. It had its adventurous moments, but you can't always find them because they don't seem to be as obvious. As far as the magical, I always put Lady of The Lake as a mythical figure that comes out of a lake and this was nothing like that!

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It also seemed to be jammed with words simply to make it rhyme which is really unnecessary.

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It truly is a personal feat to make it though this poem and if you do congrats, because I can tell you it's not easy to do.

Suvi says

I'm not entirely sure if I like rhymed poetry but there are some beautiful parts and Scotland is always appreciated.

Sir Memesalot says

My sister bought me a 1845 edition of this book when I was twelve, I'm 17 now and I've only just plucked up the courage to read it! The writing and format was not the thing that was keeping me from reading it, the delicate pages and worn spine were the problem.

The writing on the opening page leads me to believe it belonged to a Scottish priest who for certain is no longer alive and the thought of accidentally destroying that history kept me from even picking it up.

I'm mad at myself for not reading it sooner, It is a rich tale of warriors and maidens and thrilling descriptions that will leave you captivated! I lost myself for hours in the narrative and if you have the taste for it I'd recommend you do the same!

Aubrey says

"The rose is fairest when 't budding new, and hope is brightest when it dawns from fears; the rose is sweetest washed with morning dew, and love is loveliest when embalmed in tears." -Walter Scott

The Lady of the Lakes is a romantic tale centering on three characters: Willamina Stuart, Charlotte Carpenter, and Mr. Walter Scott. Willamina is a young beauty and an only child to her sophisticated parents. She deals with pressure of parental expectations regarding matrimony and her contradicting ideas. Charlotte Carpenter is a lady seven and twenty years of age who is of French nationality. Her uncle has been her guardian for years and she explores the possibilities of her future and fantasizes about her dreams of being a wife and mother. Mr. Walter is a writer with a deep appreciation for poetic language. He is enamored with Willamina Stuart and ponders of a future with her. He comes to realize what true love is and what his values in a wife would be. Each of these characters struggle with the opinions of others as they strive to follow their hearts. They come to learn what true love is, and learn more about themselves while doing so.

I enjoyed this book, especially after finishing a few beginning chapters. The first chapters feel more like an introduction to the story and following chapters are filled with more interesting happenings, which leads to different characters spending time together in the book. The story taught about what it is to really feel love and gave insightful perspective on such matters. I enjoyed the moral of the story as well as the romance. I believe that many who enjoy regency romances would enjoy this historical proper romance.

I have read 75% of the book.

Sirpa Grierson says

Amazingly, this used to be taught in the 9th grade at the turn of the last century. Don't know if our students could read it today. The story is wonderful and would make a romantic and action-packed film. At his best, Sir Walter Scott is eloquent and the story flows through its poetic cantos so quickly that one can't put it down. Some parts however, drag a bit for a modern audience. Based loosely on the reign of James V, King of Scotland, and the beautiful Ellen, this is an almost forgotten yet richly rewarding account of the battles between the Scottish highlanders and lowlanders. With Robin Hood; burning crosses, later sadly adopted by the Klu Klux Klan (the first two words came from the Greek word for circle); the song Hail to the Chief; Schubert's Ave Maria, and much more, the story has a rich cultural footprint.

My interest in it was aroused when going through family genealogy and realizing that Duncan as well as Rob Roy are family ancestors. My husband's highland roots come out with every Scottish festival and he reminds me of Sir Douglas in the story--a man of uncommon strength and valor. :) Recommended for those who want to work at reading a little harder as one should at least read the wiki intro first to get a grasp of the three story lines and the major characters. Also, I didn't purchase the book, instead I read the free 1903 Google scan of the Nightingale edition with and introduction by Chalmers. :) It has pages of excellent explanatory notes in the back. Next: Rob Roy by Sir Walter Scott as well!

Teri-K says

Beautiful writing, but I can tell it's been a long time since I read a long narrative poem because it took me a bit to get settled into it. I had to force myself to slow down and savor the language and imagery. Still the writing is lovely, the descriptions pull you in, and the story grows on you. I feel like I should give it 5 stars, but I think it throws too many people at you too quickly, and most of us don't have the background to keep everyone straight easily. The version I read had the notes in the back and it helps to read them as you go along.

I loved the poetry and the romantic story. Add in the fact that I'll be seeing the area - and Lake Katrine - this spring and I loved rereading this. I won't wait 40 years to reread it again.

Laura says

I wish that I had read this in a college class or a discourse on poems. That would have helped a great deal. As a novice to Scottish lore and poetry in general, I was often at a loss. The poetry and imagery were beautiful. I understood the events in general, but not specifics. I probably needed to read this with a cliff note guide or similar helper.

Sam Howard says

The only thing i read on my Romantic Literature MA that i gave a crap about. If you want Romantic poetry that defies Wordsworth, and his ever-so-tedious ilk, then this is the guy. Rock on Scotland, the progenitor of pissing people off.

This poem is written with extensive notes; it is PIVOTAL that the poem is read in conjunction with these. All the peri-textual material, the introduction, the notes are as much the beating heart of the poem as the Cantos. They display a measure of detail, both real, and fake that really produce the truth of this poems agenda - what is history? Is it a song? Is it folk law? Is it the enduring landscape, which bears the scars of former generations? Is it all of the above? Is it none of the above? Scott uses all his power as an atiquarian to historicize Scotland's National Identity in this poem. So much so that, on its publication, it became the premier Victorian vacation spot. Literary Tourism at its biggest and baddest.

Like most of Scott, it is now plunged into the depths of obscurity. I should never have come accross it unless i did my post grad course. So much of fiction is so easily forgotten, but at one point, this was the most printed book in the world. Probably why you can find editions of Scott's poetry in second hand book shops in

such numbers. Not everyone has the ability to endure like Austen, or Shakespeare. Scott deserves more focus. He is a dude.

This poem is an exercise in creative innovation. A vision of the past to define the future. The great thing is - he succeeded. A great neo-medievalist text. He held the baton high. Go on there Scotty-boy!
