



Ruth (Oxford World's Classics)

Elizabeth Gaskell

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'I think I must be an improper woman without knowing it, I do so manage to shock people.'

Elizabeth Gaskell's second novel challenged contemporary social attitudes by taking as its heroine a fallen woman. Ruth Hilton is an orphan and an overworked seamstress, an innocent preyed upon by a weak, wealthy seducer. When he heartlessly abandons her she finds shelter and kindness in the home of a dissenting minister and his sister, who do not reject her when she gives birth to an illegitimate child. But Ruth's self-sacrificing love and devotion are tested to the limit by a twist of fate that brings her past back to haunt her.

Gaskell's depiction of Ruth lays bare Victorian hypocrisy and sexual double-standards, and her novel is a remarkable story of love, of the sanctuary and tyranny of the family, and of the consequences of lies and deception.

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