

**Ethan Frome**

*by Edith Wharton*

In the beginning of the book, the narrator tells the readers about Ethan Frome, a good-looking silent provincial man, who lives in Starkfield, New England. Once the narrator was looking for a way to go home from railway station, and Ethan agreed to give him a ride. After that, every day Ethan used to give the narrator a lift to and from the railway station. But one winter evening on the way home they found themselves in a hard storm. The weather was growing so bad that Ethan offered the narrator to stay at his farm for the night. There, at Ethan's farm, the narrator could see members of Ethan's family: his tall and pale wife, Zeena, and one more woman, Mattie Silver, Zeena's cousin, who was paralyzed after an accident. At this point, the narrator unfolds Ethan's story, which goes back in time.

About twenty five years ago Ethan Frome lost his mother. Feeling extremely lonely after her death, he married Zeena Pierce, his far relative, who has been looking after his mother during the sickness. Zeena was a tough and harsh woman. She suffered hypochondria, and her health went from bad to worse. She called her cousin, Mattie, to stay with them at the farm and to help with housekeeping. Very soon Ethan realized that he'd fallen in love with that young beautiful lady. Mattie was also very kind to him, but however they did not dare to open feelings to each other. Zeena, seeing this tension between two people, started going more and more displeased with such situation.

One day Zeena had to go out for some days to see her distant relative and a doctor, so Mattie and Ethan were left in the farm alone. They arranged a dinner and enjoyed their time in silent house, until suddenly a cat broke down Zeena's favorite pickle-dish, which they used at their dinner. Ethan promised Mattie to glue it together on the next day, but Zeena arrived unexpectedly early and discovered the broken dish at once. Besides, she brought some bad news: her health got worse and she had to hire another girl to do all the housekeeping. Despite of continuous protests and anger of Ethan, Zeena insisted on Mattie's going away. In

despair, Ethan decided to escape with Mattie, but without the money and proper place to go their life would be more miserable.

On the next day Ethan wanted to give Mattie a ride to the railway station. On the way they were exchanging their memories about beautiful times spent together, and suddenly they confessed their love to each other. Dejected by coming separation, Mattie offered to do a sled ride from the snowy hill and to die in accident together. Ethan agreed with this idea, so they sled right into an elm tree under the hill. Finally, they both survived this accident, but both remained in terrible condition: Mattie was left handicapped, Ethan was cruelly injured. Broken, they were taken back home, where Zeena used to take care about them till Ethan could rise up from his bed and start making some money. In the end, story comes back to present times, when the narrator talks to other people of the town about Ethan's miserable life and destiny.

Despite of rather classic development of the plot and abundance of clichés, I enjoyed reading this novel quite a lot. It vividly shows tragic life of a good man, who started his life in marriage without love and then awkwardly brought it to one of the most terrible ends imaginable in such circumstances. Ethan practically placed himself into the grave alive. His real tragedy is to live his life bounded to the woman he hates, and being next to the other woman, who could make him really happy. It is a book about loneliness, aspiration for love, poorness, unhappiness. This novel can not leave any reader untouched and unaffected.

In addition, I liked allegoric tools, which the author uses in this novel: for example, strengthening of emotions of sadness and misery by introducing into the story some pictures of stormy winter weather, depressive behaviors of characters suffering from sicknesses, or moral pressure of poorness and hopelessness. Besides, I liked the language of the book: it brings the reader to the exact mood of the situation and makes the story compact and natural. The novel captivated me and I have read it for one day.

**Bibliography:**

- Wharton, Edith. "Ethan Frome" Signet Book ( June 1, 2000), 160 pages.