

the go between by lp hartley

the go between by lp hartley is a renowned novel that explores complex themes of memory, social conventions, and forbidden love. This classic work, first published in 1953, revolves around the experiences of a young boy acting as an intermediary, or "go-between," in a secret romance between two adults. The narrative is rich with symbolism and offers a poignant commentary on class distinctions and the loss of innocence. The novel's enduring appeal lies in its evocative prose and the subtle psychological depth with which Hartley portrays his characters. This article delves into the plot, themes, characters, and literary significance of *the go between by lp hartley*, providing a comprehensive understanding of its impact on English literature. Readers will also find an analysis of the novel's setting and narrative style, enhancing appreciation for Hartley's craftsmanship.

- Overview and Plot Summary
- Main Themes in The Go Between
- Character Analysis
- Setting and Historical Context
- Narrative Style and Literary Techniques
- Critical Reception and Legacy

Overview and Plot Summary

The Go Between by L.P. Hartley tells the story of Leo Colston, a young boy who is invited to spend the summer at the country estate of a wealthy school friend. During his stay, Leo becomes the unwitting intermediary in a secret love affair between Marian Maudsley, the daughter of the estate's owner, and Ted Burgess, a tenant farmer. The plot unfolds through Leo's perspective, capturing his gradual realization of the adult world's complexities. As Leo delivers messages between the lovers, he becomes entangled in a tragic situation that ultimately shatters his innocence.

The novel's structure alternates between Leo's childhood memories and his adult reflections, creating a layered narrative that explores themes of nostalgia and regret. Hartley's storytelling is marked by a deliberate pace and rich detail, providing insight into class divisions and social expectations of early 20th-century England.

Main Themes in The Go Between

The Go Between by L.P. Hartley addresses several profound themes that contribute to its status as a literary classic. These themes include the loss of innocence, social class conflict, and the power of memory.

Loss of Innocence

The central theme revolves around Leo's transition from childhood innocence to a more complex awareness of adult realities. His role as a messenger draws him into a world of secrecy and moral ambiguity, symbolizing the painful awakening to the harsh truths of life.

Class and Social Division

Hartley examines the rigid British class system, highlighting the tension between the upper-class Maudsleys and the working-class Burgess family. The forbidden romance underscores the societal barriers that dictate behavior and relationships, reflecting the era's social constraints.

Memory and Nostalgia

Memory plays a pivotal role, as the adult Leo looks back on his childhood with a mixture of fondness and sorrow. The narrative structure emphasizes how memories shape identity and influence the interpretation of past events.

Character Analysis

The characters in *the go between* by *Ip Hartley* are crafted with psychological depth, each representing different facets of the novel's themes.

Leo Colston

Leo serves as the novel's narrator and protagonist. His innocence and naivety contrast with the secretive and often hypocritical adult world he encounters. His development highlights the theme of lost childhood and the impact of social expectations.

Marian Maudsley

Marian embodies the constraints placed on women of her class during the period. Her secret affair with Ted Burgess reflects her desire to break free from social norms, yet her actions lead to tragic consequences.

Ted Burgess

Ted is a tenant farmer who represents the working class's struggle against the rigid class hierarchy. His relationship with Marian challenges societal boundaries but ultimately underscores the limitations imposed by class divisions.

Setting and Historical Context

The setting of *the go between by lp hartley* is crucial to understanding its themes and characters. The novel is set in Norfolk, England, during the Edwardian era, a time marked by strict social stratification and impending societal change.

The country estate, with its grandeur and formality, contrasts sharply with the rustic life of the tenant farmers. This geographic and social backdrop serves as a microcosm of the broader class tensions present in British society at the time. The historical context also informs the characters' behavior and the unfolding tragedy.

Narrative Style and Literary Techniques

Hartley's narrative style in *the go between by lp hartley* is notable for its reflective tone and detailed descriptions. The use of a first-person narrator allows readers to experience events through Leo's eyes, blending innocence with retrospective insight.

Use of Flashbacks

The novel employs flashbacks to reveal the story gradually, enhancing the emotional impact and creating suspense. This technique also emphasizes the role of memory and its influence on perception.

Symbolism

Symbolism is prevalent throughout the novel. For example, the titular "go-between" represents not only Leo's role as a messenger but also the broader theme of mediation between innocence and experience, youth and adulthood.

Language and Style

Hartley's prose is elegant and precise, with an emphasis on atmospheric detail. The restrained language reflects the social mores of the period and adds to the novel's haunting quality.

Critical Reception and Legacy

Since its publication, *the go between by lp hartley* has been critically acclaimed for its insightful exploration of class, memory, and human emotion. The novel is often praised for its subtle narrative and psychological depth.

It has influenced numerous writers and has been adapted into various media, including stage productions and a notable 1971 film adaptation. The book remains a significant work in the canon of 20th-century English literature, studied for its thematic complexity and stylistic mastery.

- Praised for its evocative portrayal of Edwardian society
- Recognized for its innovative narrative structure
- Considered a seminal work on the theme of lost innocence
- Adapted into film and theater, reflecting its enduring cultural impact

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the main theme of 'The Go-Between' by L.P. Hartley?

The main theme of 'The Go-Between' is the loss of innocence and the impact of social class divisions on personal relationships.

Who is the narrator of 'The Go-Between' and why is his perspective important?

The narrator is Leo Colston, who recounts his experiences as a young boy. His perspective is important because it highlights the contrast between childhood innocence and adult understanding.

How does L.P. Hartley portray the social class differences in 'The Go-Between'?

Hartley portrays social class differences through the interactions between characters from different backgrounds, emphasizing the constraints and tensions imposed by the British class system of the early 20th century.

What role does the character Marian play in 'The Go-Between'?

Marian is a pivotal character who enlists Leo as a messenger, and her secret romance drives the central conflict and themes of forbidden love and societal expectations.

How does the setting influence the story in 'The Go-Between'?

The rural English summer setting creates a nostalgic and idyllic backdrop that contrasts with the underlying tensions and tragedies, highlighting themes of innocence and loss.

What is the significance of the opening line 'The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there'?

This famous opening line sets the tone for the novel, emphasizing memory, nostalgia, and the idea that the past is fundamentally different and unreachable from the present.

How does 'The Go-Between' explore the theme of communication and secrecy?

The novel explores how communication, often through Leo's role as a messenger, is fraught with misunderstandings and secrets that ultimately lead to tragedy.

In what ways does 'The Go-Between' reflect the historical context of early 20th century England?

The novel reflects the rigid class structures, social conventions, and the impending changes in British society before World War I, highlighting tensions between tradition and modernity.

What is the impact of Leo's role as the 'go-between' on his character development?

Leo's role exposes him to adult secrets and complexities prematurely, leading to a loss of innocence and shaping his understanding of love, betrayal, and social constraints.

Additional Resources

1. *The Remains of the Day* by Kazuo Ishiguro

This novel explores themes of memory, duty, and repression through the eyes of Stevens, an English butler reflecting on his life and service before and after World War II. Like **The Go-Between**, it delves into the complexities of social class and unspoken emotions. The restrained narrative style emphasizes what remains unsaid, much like Hartley's work. It's a poignant meditation on regret and the passage of time.

2. *Atonement* by Ian McEwan

Set in England before and during World War II, this novel centers on a young girl whose misunderstanding and false accusation alter the lives of those around her. The story shares **The Go-Between**'s exploration of innocence lost and the impact of secrets. McEwan's richly detailed prose captures the nuances of social class and forbidden love. It is a powerful examination of guilt, memory, and the consequences of our actions.

3. *Brideshead Revisited* by Evelyn Waugh

This classic novel follows Charles Ryder's relationship with the aristocratic Flyte family and his nostalgic reflections on youth and faith. Like **The Go-Between**, it investigates the tensions between social classes and the idealization of the past. The narrative is suffused with themes of memory, loss, and the complexities of human relationships. Waugh's lyrical style captures the bittersweet nature of reminiscence.

4. *The Age of Innocence* by Edith Wharton

Set in upper-class New York society in the late 19th century, this novel examines the strict social codes that govern love and behavior. Similar to **The Go-Between**, it explores the conflict between personal desire and social expectation. Wharton's incisive portrayal of a rigid social milieu reveals the constraints placed on individuals, especially women. The story is a subtle critique of societal hypocrisy and repression.

5. *Portrait of a Lady* by Henry James

This novel tells the story of Isabel Archer, a young American woman whose independence and idealism clash with the manipulative European society she encounters. Like **The Go-Between**, it grapples with themes of innocence, betrayal, and the loss of freedom. James's intricate psychological insight reveals the complexities of human motives and social conventions. The narrative highlights the tension between personal choice and external influence.

6. *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë

A classic tale of a young governess whose moral and emotional integrity guides her through hardship and love, **Jane Eyre** addresses themes of class, gender, and social constraint. Similar to **The Go-Between**, the novel explores the barriers imposed by society and the power of personal conscience. Brontë's vivid characterization and gothic atmosphere enrich the story's exploration of identity and independence.

7. *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett

While primarily a children's novel, this story of transformation and renewal shares **The Go-Between**'s motif of hidden places and the uncovering of secrets. It deals with themes of innocence, healing, and the impact of environment on personal growth. The narrative's focus on discovery and change resonates with Hartley's exploration of lost youth and revelation.

8. *Lady Chatterley's Lover* by D.H. Lawrence

This controversial novel explores the passionate affair between an upper-class woman and her gamekeeper, challenging class boundaries and societal norms. Similar to **The Go-Between**, it examines forbidden love and the constraints of social convention. Lawrence's frank treatment of sexuality and emotional complexity contrasts with Hartley's more restrained style but echoes the same themes of desire and repression.

9. *Revolutionary Road* by Richard Yates

Set in 1950s suburban America, this novel depicts a young couple's struggle with conformity, disillusionment, and the pursuit of happiness. Like **The Go-Between**, it critiques social expectations and the hidden tensions within seemingly perfect lives. Yates's stark and penetrating prose exposes the fragility of human dreams and the costs of societal pressure. The narrative is a powerful study of communication breakdown and emotional estrangement.

[The Go Between By Lp Hartley](#)

The Go Between By Lp Hartley

Related Articles

- [the family business by carl weber 3](#)
- [the fisherman and his wife](#)
- [the complete stories flannery o connor 2](#)

[Back to Home](#)