

Fidelity



Author:	Susan Glaspell
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Fidelity (1915) is a classic that should be put beside books by writers such as Edith Wharton and Willa Cather; yet the novels of Susan Glaspell, who was once considered America's greatest living playwright apart from Eugène O'Neill (and who is best-known for her short play, 'Trifles') have been ignored. Set in Iowa in 1900 and in 1913, this dramatic and deeply moral novel uses complex but subtle use of flashback to describe a girl named Ruth Holland, bored with her life at home, falling in love with a married man and running off with him; when she comes back more than a decade later we are shown how her actions have affected those around her. Ruth had taken another woman's husband and as such 'Freeport' society thinks she is 'a human being who selfishly - basely - took her own happiness, leaving misery for others. She outraged society as completely as a woman could outrage it... One who defies it - deceives it - must be shut out from it.' But, like Emma Bovary, Edna Pontellier in 'The Awakening' and Nora in 'A Doll's House' Ruth has 'a diffused longing for an enlarged experience... Her energies having been shut off from the way they had wanted to go, she was all the more zestful for new things from life...' It is these that are explored in Fidelity.