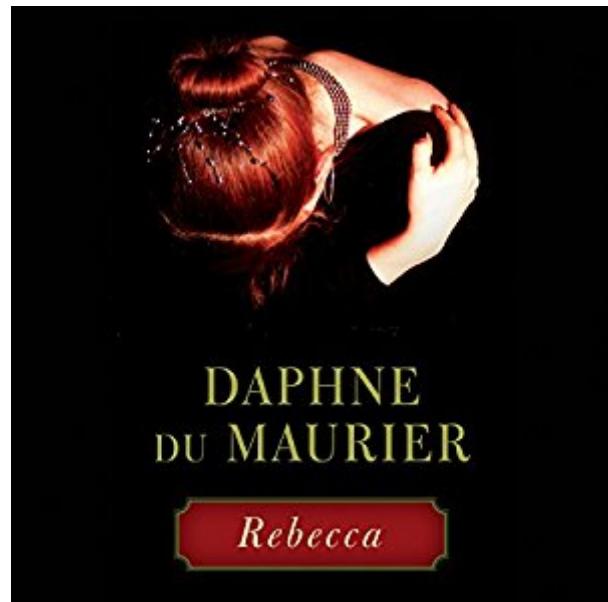


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# Rebecca



## **Synopsis**

Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again.... The novel begins in Monte Carlo, where our heroine is swept off her feet by the dashing widower Maxim de Winter and his sudden proposal of marriage. Orphaned and working as a lady's maid, she can barely believe her luck. It is only when they arrive at his massive country estate that she realizes how large a shadow his late wife will cast over their lives - resenting her with a lingering evil that threatens to destroy their marriage from beyond the grave. First published in 1938, this classic gothic novel is such a compelling tale that it won the Anthony Award for Best Novel of the Century.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

This book is one of the all-time greatest works of fiction, combining suspense, romance, and character development, all wrapped up in a mystery that is literally not resolved until the last page. Modern readers should treat this story as a period piece of sorts; American readers in particular should bear in mind the differences between British and American cultures, and also the historical differences (Rebecca was published in 1938), otherwise they are apt to find the story 'slow' or 'dull.' Like any great mystery writer, du Maurier throws out subtle clues in the first third of the story; about halfway through, she begins to resolve these clues, and from then on, the story races at full steam. \*Don't let\* the seemingly slow introduction stop you from finishing the book; patient readers will be well-rewarded when they see how brilliantly du Maurier sets up her surprises. The story revolves around the unusual marriage of the young, unworldly narrator (whose first name is never revealed, one of the book's charming idiosyncrasies) to the brooding 'landed gentleman,'

Maxim de Winter. When she arrives at his grand country manor, Manderly (the house is perhaps the book's most potent character), she is immediately confronted by the other characters' feelings about Rebecca, Maxim de Winter's flamboyant late wife. Perhaps du Maurier's greatest accomplishment, character-wise, is the way she develops Rebecca, who is already dead when the main action of the story begins, and never really appears 'on-screen,' so to speak. Rebecca is very much alive in the memories of Maxim, the house servants, friends and family members, but most crucially, of her personal maid, Mrs. Danvers (and also of Rebecca's sleazy cousin, Jack Favel). It is Mrs. Danvers who becomes the greatest nemesis of the narrator, and who makes the frightened young woman feel utterly unwanted and unloved in her new home. If Rebecca truly does haunt Manderly, Mrs. Danvers is her conduit to the world of the living. After a treacherous episode that almost brings the narrator to the breaking point, a string of coincidences alters everything; the narrator learns the truth about what turns out to be a lot of mistaken assumptions. In the process, she herself grows into a far more confident person. The last quarter of the story is an absolute masterpiece, as the action takes one turn, then another, then another. And even when it seems that all the clues have been resolved, du Maurier saves one last whammy for the final page. I first read this book twenty years ago, and it made more of an impression on me than just about anything else I've read since. I re-read it from time to time, and gain a new insight with every perusal. In short, *Rebecca* is a wonderful, wonderful novel, and not to be missed. I can't recommend it highly enough-- read it, linger over it, enjoy it, and read it again. It's a true literary achievement.

This riveting tale of fear, suspicion, and love opens as the unnamed narrator reminisces about her former home, the grand English estate, Manderley. She had been young and shy, a lady's companion, when she met the wealthy recent widow, Maxim de Winter, fell in love with him, and married him in a matter of weeks. They returned to his home, where she was immediately overwhelmed with the responsibilities of running the house and dealing with her forbidding housekeeper as well as the memory of Maxim's first wife, Rebecca. She had been beautiful, sophisticated, and supremely confident, and the narrator felt lost and helpless in comparison. Her new husband was strangely distant to her, until a horrible secret was revealed that would change their lives and the very existence of Manderley. Daphne Du Maurier has crafted a wonderfully spooky story with remarkably little action, but a great deal of atmosphere and a steadily mounting feeling of impending doom. The ravishing Rebecca is never seen, and yet she is the main character, dominating the story with her passions and cruelty. Another main "character" is the great house itself, which is described in such fascinating detail that I felt as if I had walked its long

hallways, descended its grand stairs, and had tea in the library. The narrator is purposely kept anonymous to contrast her with the larger-than-life Rebecca, and Maxim is a seriously flawed but lovable man. Anna Massey does not just read the story, she performs it, delighting the listener with her upper-class British accent, giving a different voice to each character. I happily recommend this audio cassette version of *Rebecca* to those who enjoy exciting tales of suspense, psychological dramas, and mysteries.

A young, naive woman who is the paid companion of an obnoxious rich woman is taken along to Monte Carlo. While she smarts under the rudeness and gauche behavior of her employer, she meets the dark, handsome widower Max de Winter. What follows is a love story and a ghost story of a woman haunted by the powerful presence of the former mistress of Manderley. We never learn the name of the heroine as she marries Max, moves into the rigid but elegant life at Manderley and tangles with Mrs. Danvers, Manderley's fearsome housekeeper. What unfolds is not only a mystery but a story of obsessions and evil. The end is a shock. Du Maurier created an unforgettable atmosphere of decaying beauty, frightening spirits and horror mixed with love and death. If you haven't read this, I am envious. You get to experience it for the first time.

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