

Sentimental Education (Oxford World's Classics)

Gustave Flaubert



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'For certain men the stronger their desire, the less likely they are to act.'

With his first glimpse of Madame Arnoux, Frédéric Moreau is convinced he has found his romantic destiny, but when he pursues her to Paris the young student is unable to translate his passion into decisive action. He also finds himself distracted by the equally romantic appeal of political action in the turbulent years leading up to the revolution of 1848, and by the attractions of three other women, each of whom seeks to make him her own: a haughty society lady, a capricious courtesan, and an artless country girl.

Flaubert offers a vivid and unsparing portrait of the young men of his generation, struggling to salvage something of their ideals in a city where corruption, consumerism, and a pervasive sense of disenchantment undermine all but the most compromised erotic, aesthetic, and social initiatives. Sentimental Education combines thoroughgoing irony with an impartial but unexpectedly intense sympathy in a novel whose realism competes with that of Balzac and whose innovations in narrative plot and perspective mark a turning-point in the development of literary modernism.

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