

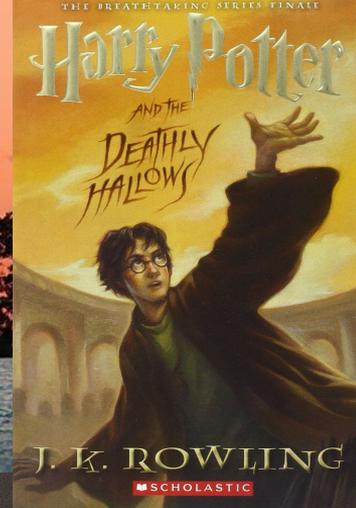
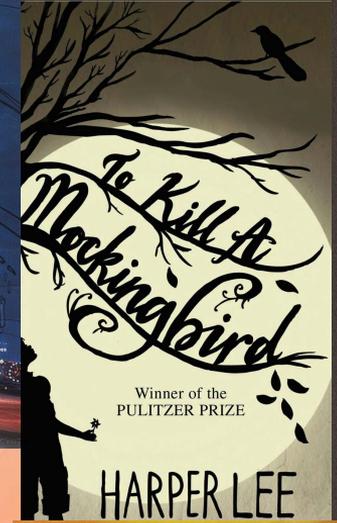
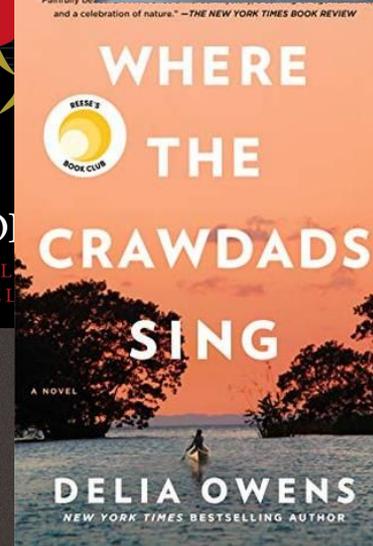
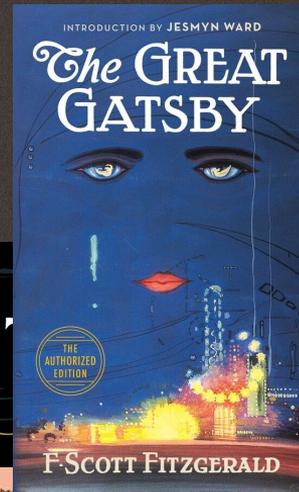
Bad Reputation:

How Susanna Rowson Uplifted
Young Women Using the
Sentimental Novel
Charlotte Temple

By Darby Tanner



The novel is
an effective
instructional
tool.



The sentimental
novel was an
effective
instructional tool for
post-revolutionary
young women.

EARLY AMERICAN WOMEN WRITERS

CHARLOTTE
TEMPLE



SUSANNA
ROWSON



with an Introduction by

CATHY N. DAVIDSON

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Contextualize my topic and introduce the novel.

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Trace the sentimental novel's historical reputation.

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Explore *Charlotte Temple's* publication and marketing tactics.

04

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Reinforce how the sentimental novel empowered young women.



01

Introduction

What's a
sentimental novel,
and what's the point?





Novel

Long prose that describes fictional characters and events.



Sentimentality

excessive tenderness, sadness, or
nostalgia



Sentimentality



✓ Didacticism

✓ Emotion

✓ Sympathetic
Connection



✗ Bad Morals

✗ Excessive Emoting

✗ Distraction
from Duty





Referred to as everything from
“vulgar” and **“effeminate”**

(Fordyce 265)

to

“a mass of trash” that **“unsettles”**
a woman from her **“true station and
pursuits”**(Zinn 117).

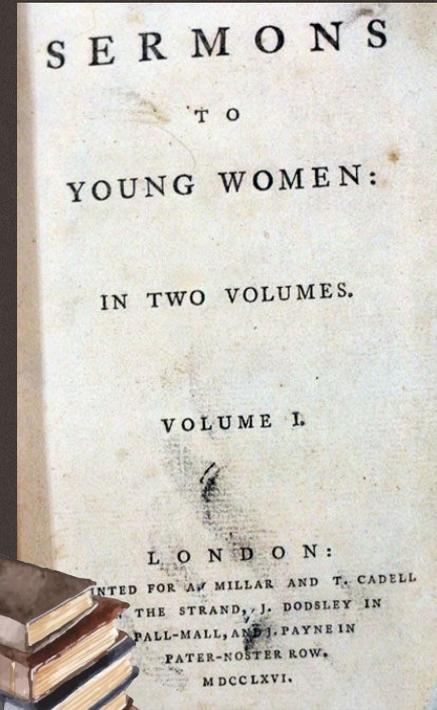


Why were sentimental novels like *Charlotte Temple* so **widely read** and yet **historically undervalued**?



02

The Novel's
Reputation, A
History



Tenets of a Bad Reputation

2 Audience

Sexist social expectations of “proper” books for women.

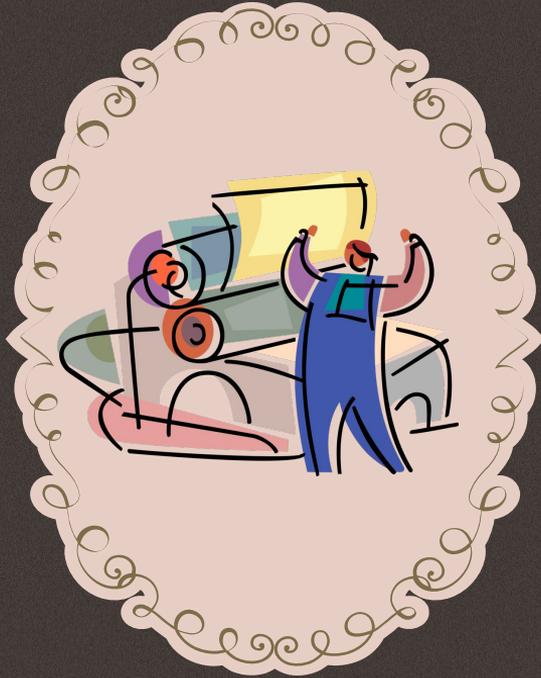
1 Publication

New publishing technology and American print culture.

3 Morality

Specific expectations to establish and explore moral themes.

Publication



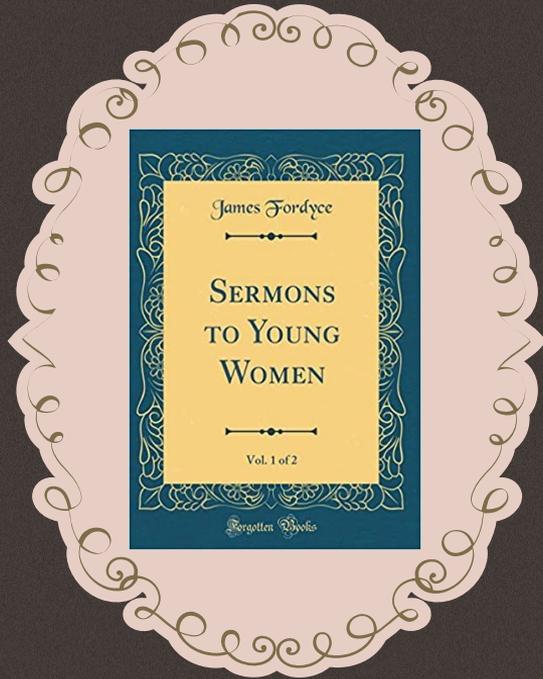
1. Changing physical appearance affects reputation
2. Faster production and greater access to materials helped novels boom
3. As a result, improved printing technology pitted religious texts against fictional ones

Audience

Encouraged over “dyspeptic” romantic novels, conduct books instructed women on societal expectations for proper behavior (Brown 9).



Morality



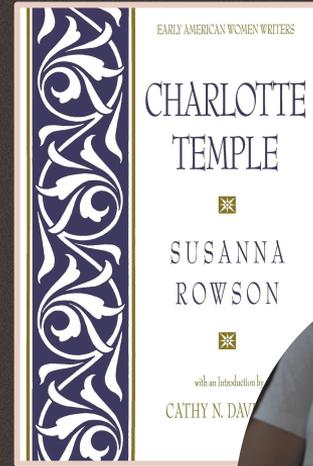
[1] Conduct books place the world on women's shoulders

so

[2] Sentimental novels were judged harshly on moral standards

03

Charlotte's
Road to the
Reader



Lacking Education

Women were barred from traditional education, including:

- Sciences
- Arithmetic
- Classic Lit

Instead, they were expected to:

- Manage the home
- Keep quiet,
- Obey their husbands and fathers
- Pursue “feminine” amusements



Rowson's Experience

1. Education enables agency!
2. Affordability is key



04

The
Empowered
Audience



Charlotte Temple's Experience



1. Couldn't Trust Herself
2. Couldn't Trust Others
 - a. Belcour, Montraville, Mademoiselle La Rue
3. Rendered to Complete Dependence



“That I loved my seducer is but too true! I never once reflected that the man who could stoop to seduction, would not hesitate to forsake the wretched object of his passion... I vainly expected him to fulfill his engagements... I was conscious of having forfeited the only gem that could render me respectable in the eye of the world” (Rowson 80).

Charlotte Temple as Empowerment



Warns Against Danger

- Rowson muffles the “patriarchal authority” housed in conduct literature and amplifies the female experience, standing in contradiction to the notion that female voices were not viable sources of proper conduct for young readers (Stern 3-4)

Subverts Cultural Expectations



Thanks!

Mentor: Dr. Lori Leavell

Second
Reader: Dr. Glenn Jellenik

Advisor: Dr. Ruby Mongno

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