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A Lantern In Her Hand (Puffin Classics)



Synopsis

When *A Lantern in Her Hand* came out in 1928, critics took little notice, but people everywhere soon discovered it. By the end of 1919, even as the Great Depression set in, Bess Streeter Aldrich's novel was in its twenty-first printing. Now translated into over twenty languages, *A Lantern in Her Hand* has outlasted literary fashions to touch generations of readers. It is the classic story of a pioneer woman. Bess Streeter Aldrich knew what she was writing about. Her protagonist, a strong-minded pioneer woman named Abbie Deal, was modeled on her own mother, who in 1854 had traveled by covered wagon to the Midwest. In *A Lantern in Her Hand*, Abbie accompanies her family to the soon-to-be state of Nebraska. There, in 1865, she marries and settles into a sod house of her own. The novel describes Abbie's years of child-raising, of making a frontier home able to withstand every adversity. A disciplined writer knowledgeable about true stories of pioneer days in Nebraska, Bess Streeter Aldrich conveys the strength of everyday things, the surprise of familiar faces, and the look of the unspoiled landscape during different seasons. Refusing to be broken by hard experience, Abbie sets a joyful example for her family - and for her readers. This Bison Book edition includes Bess Streeter Aldrich's own story of how she came to write *A Lantern in Her Hand*.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

When Abbie McKenzie was young she dreamed of becoming a lovely lady like her grandmother. She wanted to paint beautiful pictures and become a world famous singer. She even gets a chance to fulfill those dreams when the dashing young doctor hears her singing, falls in love, and offers to

take her East and away from Iowa with him. But people's ideals change sometimes. Abbie finds love with poor but steady Will Deal. She gives up everything to move to Nebraska with him. Many obstacles awaited them there but together they made it. Abbie and Will were barely getting by, but their children were as happy as kings. Maybe that's because their lovely mother brought them up "with a song upon her lips and a lantern in her hand". As Abbie Deal grows old, she realizes that none of her old dreams will ever come true for her but they will through her children. And as an old woman, she can look back on her life with a smile. This book is beautiful and touching and will bring tears to your eyes. I recommend this book because I absolutely loved it every time I read it.

Like some other reviewers, I read this when I was quite young, and the story of Abbie Deal, who crossed the prairie to settle in Nebraska with her beloved husband Will, left a deep and abiding impression in my heart. Many times I have thought of Abbie Deal's story of strength and survival. She reminds me of my grandmother, who faced her own challenges in the early 1900's in the east Texas piney woods. Abbie, with her long slender fingers, shapely figure, her singing and painting talents, was born in the mid 1800's. Falling in love with Will Deal, she left her small town to travel with him to the uncivilized prairie to raise her family while facing weather disasters, insects, isolation, lack of cultural 'food' and the ever-present threat of disease and death. Could I have lived in a sod shanty or had babies with only a gruff German-speaking neighbor as midwife? Could I have kept my sanity while sweeping locusts out the door in great piles? While perhaps not the most elegant or multi-layered author, Bess Streeter Aldrich earns my respect by her straight-forward style, and by creating many of the most lively, memorable characters ever. One of the most poignant themes is how Abbie over time loses her shapely figure, her slender fingers becoming knarled by hard work, her singing and painting disused and forgotten. Yet how those attributes are 're-incarnated' in the following generations is one of the scenes that bring tears to my eyes every time I read it. If a book can be valued by the number of times that it is recalled in the reader's mind as a source of humor, comfort or warm nostalgia, then this book is among my most cherished few. Get this book, read it, love it. Become part of the community of those of us who have taken this work to our hearts.

"A Lantern in Her Hand" is such a deep story, that I could only handle reading it in small portions. Each and every time, I would close the book with such sadness in my heart. Abbie worked so hard as a mother and a wife, and sacrificed her dreams and wantings, that it made me think of what my parents might have set aside for me. Her children, when grown, bothered me so much, to think their

mother old-fashioned and somewhat senile. If only we can have such fond and cherished memories when we live to be in our 80s. I recommend.

This was one of the most heartwarming, touching, most precious stories I've ever read. What I loved most about it (apart from the lovely and poetical way of writing), was how Aldrich wrote the story of Abby's whole life, and not just the romance era like most authors do. I never would have considered that old people are never really old, it's just that they have outgrown what the rest of us are still waiting to grow into; that they once had lives with romance and accomplishments and thing of their own, had I not read this book. Well, anyways, the story goes like this: Abby Mackenzie is eight years old when she moves to a little community with her family, and meets Will Deal. Well, all her young life, Abby has been told the story of her aristocratic father married her peasant mother, putting the rest of the family into peasantry. Her dream is to be like her aristocratic grandmother, Isabel Anders-Mackenzie, who has a portrait which Abby has only seen in her imagination. Well, when Abby grows older, she is courted by the dashing young doctor, Ed Mathews, who proposes while her friend Will is off at war. She thinks that if she marries him, she will have the chance to pursue all the dreams of being a fine lady, especially enriching her lovely singing voice. But, then Will comes home, and Abby marries him, realizing that he was the one she really loved. So, the newly weds pioneer-on-over to Nebraska Territory, where they raise a family. The rest of the story tells of their life on the prairie, and how Abby is able to live her dreams through her children instead of herself. The book goes on until she dies in her eighties. I loved it with all of my heart, and absolutely COULD NOT have imagined a sweeter ending than the one Aldrich gave. Read this book!

I read this book thirty years ago and can still remember how deeply it affected me. I've read it several times since then and it never loses its magic. I would HIGHLY recommend this book to anyone--young or old.

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