

The Vicar Of Wakefield Summary

The Vicar of Wakefield, by Oliver Goldsmith, was originally published in 1766. Goldsmith was an Irish novelist and this novel, written from the point of view of the vicar, was widely popular among Victorians in the late nineteenth century. Goldsmith was friends with Dr. Samuel Johnson, a well-known literary critic and author. Johnson reportedly helped Goldsmith publish the novel in order to pay back rent. Although the novel incorporates multiple genres—everything from poetry to sermons to prose—most critics consider The Vicar of Wakefield to be a fictional memoir told in the first person.

The novel opens with the vicar and his family. Dr. Charles Primrose lives in his country parish with his wife, Deborah, and their children, among whom are George, Olivia, and Sophia. They can afford their comfortable lifestyle because Charles wisely invested inheritance he received from a relative, who passed away before the story begins. Of his wealth, he donates thirty-five pounds to orphans and veterans alike. That money comes from his wages. Charles' son George is set to marry Arabella Wilmot the next day. Arabella comes from a wealthy family, so the match is considered beneficial to both families until the vicar's investor goes bankrupt and loses all of the vicar's money before leaving town in a rush.

As a result, Arabella's father calls off the wedding and George is sent to town. With his Oxford education, the Primrose family hopes he can make his own way there. The others all move to another parish, humbler in situation than where they lived at the start of the book. It is on land owned by Squire Thornhill. On their way there, they learn about Thornhill's womanizing reputation. They hear, too, about his uncle's reputation, which is one of generosity and worth. His uncle is named Sir William Thornhill.

Meanwhile, Sophia nearly drowns but is rescued by a man named Mr. Burchell. The family met him at an inn on their way to their new parish. However, Deborah, who is ambitious for her children and wants them to make advantageous matches, discourages any feelings of attachment Sophia might have for Mr. Burchell. Life settles into happiness and regularity. Both Mr. Burchell and Squire Thornhill visit the family frequently.

Olivia is swayed by Squire Thornhill's charm and good looks, but she's not the only one. Both Deborah and Sophia become convinced that their ambitions will be answered should he marry one of them. After Olivia reportedly flees the parish, Charles initially believes Mr. Burchell to be the driving force behind her disappearance. However, when he finds Olivia, he learns that it was Squire Thornhill who persuaded her to leave. He had convinced her they would marry, though he intended only to undergo a mockwedding, and planned to leave her afterwards, which Charles learns is Squire Thornhill's *modus operandi*.

Olivia returns home with Charles, only to find that their house is on fire. The family lives, but they lose all of their possessions and money. Squire Thornhill continues to demand that Charles pay rent, despite the fact that the house is destroyed. Since Charles cannot pay, Squire Thornhill has him arrested and brought to debtor's prison. George, hearing of Squire Thornhill's behavior, challenges him, but is arrested as well. Sophia is abducted and Olivia reported dead. All seems lost for the vicar, at least until Mr. Burchell returns.

After rescuing Sophia, Mr. Burchell determines that Olivia is alive. The vicar learns that Burchell's true identity is none other than Sir William Thornhill, the uncle of whom the Primrose family had heard such favorable reports. At the end of the story, there is a double wedding during which George and Arabella are finally able to marry, and Sir William Thornhill marries Sophia. As it turns out, the mockwedding that Squire Thornhill had planned with Olivia wasn't fake at all, and they are actually married. In a final benevolent twist, the bankrupt investor who lost the vicar's money at the beginning of the story is rediscovered, and Charles' wealth is restored.

While this work can be viewed as a satire on sentimental fiction, the main theme of the story is faith. Dr. Charles Primrose, the vicar, can be viewed as Job from the Bible, who suffers and suffers but never loses faith, and whose continued devotion is ultimately rewarded by God. Wakefield is an important site for Christian literature. The Wakefield Master, known for writing the Wakefield Mystery Plays, was a celebrated contributor of mystery plays that conveyed the mysteries of the Christian faith in a way that was accessible to the people. The Wakefield Master's works are well-known and studied in literary criticism to this day. By placing the vicar in Wakefield, Goldsmith draws a bridge between The Vicar of Wakefield and those mystery plays.

The Vicar of Wakefield is mentioned in a number of other literary classics, including but not limited to Middlemarch by George Eliot, Emma by Jane Austen, A Tale of Two Cities by Charles Dickens, Frankenstein by Mary Shelley, and Little Women by Louisa May Alcott. There were three silent film adaptations of The Vicar of Wakefield in 1910, 1913, and 1916.

Robinson Crusoe Summary

Robinson Crusoe, as a young and impulsive wanderer, defied his parents and went to sea. He was involved in a series of violent storms at sea and was warned by the captain that he should not be a seafaring man. Ashamed to go home, Crusoe boarded another ship and returned from a successful trip to Africa. Taking off again, Crusoe met with bad luck and was taken prisoner in Sallee. His captors sent Crusoe out to fish, and he used this to his advantage and escaped, along with a slave.

He was rescued by a Portuguese ship and started a new adventure. He landed in Brazil, and, after some time, he became the owner of a sugar plantation. Hoping to increase his wealth by buying slaves, he aligned himself with other planters and undertook a trip to Africa in order to bring back a shipload of slaves. After surviving a storm, Crusoe and the others were shipwrecked. He was thrown upon shore only to discover that he was the sole survivor of the wreck.

Crusoe made immediate plans for food, and then shelter, to protect himself from wild animals. He brought as many things as possible from the wrecked ship, things that would be useful later to him. In addition, he began to develop talents that he had never used in order to provide himself with necessities. Cut off from the company of men, he began to communicate with God, thus beginning the first part of his religious conversion. To keep his sanity and to entertain himself, he began a journal. In the journal, he recorded every task that he performed each day since he had been marooned.

As time passed, Crusoe became a skilled craftsman, able to construct many useful things, and thus furnished himself with diverse comforts. He also learned about farming, as a result of some seeds which he brought with him. An illness prompted some prophetic dreams, and Crusoe began to reappraise his duty to God. Crusoe explored his island and discovered another part of the island much richer and more fertile, and he built a summer home there.

One of the first tasks he undertook was to build himself a canoe in case an escape became possible, but the canoe was too heavy to get to the water. He then constructed a small boat and journeyed around the island. Crusoe reflected on his earlier, wicked life, disobeying his parents, and wondered if it might be related to his isolation on this island.

After spending about fifteen years on the island, Crusoe found a man's naked footprint, and he was sorely beset by apprehensions, which kept him awake many nights. He considered many possibilities to account for the footprint and he began to take extra precautions against a possible intruder. Sometime later, Crusoe was horrified to find human bones scattered about the shore, evidently the remains of a savage feast. He was plagued again with new fears. He explored the nature of cannibalism and debated his right to interfere with the customs of another race.

Crusoe was cautious for several years, but encountered nothing more to alarm him. He found a cave, which he used as a storage room, and in December of the same year, he spied cannibals sitting around a campfire. He did not see them again for quite some time.

Later, Crusoe saw a ship in distress, but everyone was already drowned on the ship and Crusoe remained companionless. However, he was able to take many provisions from this newly wrecked ship. Sometime later, cannibals landed on the island and a victim escaped. Crusoe saved his life, named him Friday, and taught him English. Friday soon became Crusoe's humble and devoted slave.

Crusoe and Friday made plans to leave the island and, accordingly, they built another boat. Crusoe also undertook Friday's religious education, converting the savage into a Protestant. Their voyage was postponed due to the return of the savages. This time it was necessary to attack the cannibals in order to save two prisoners since one was a white man. The white man was a Spaniard and the other was Friday's father. Later the four of them planned a voyage to the mainland to rescue sixteen compatriots of the Spaniard. First, however, they built up their food supply to assure enough food for the extra people. Crusoe and Friday agreed to wait on the island while the Spaniard and Friday's father brought back the other men.

A week later, they spied a ship but they quickly learned that there had been a mutiny on board. By devious means, Crusoe and Friday rescued the captain and two other men, and after much scheming, regained control of the ship. The grateful captain gave Crusoe many gifts and took him and Friday back to England. Some of the rebel crewmen were left marooned on the island.

Crusoe returned to England and found that in his absence he had become a wealthy man. After going to Lisbon to handle some of his affairs, Crusoe began an overland journey back to England. Crusoe and his company encountered many hardships in crossing the mountains, but they finally arrived safely in England. Crusoe sold his plantation in Brazil for a good price, married, and had three children. Finally, however, he was persuaded to go on yet another voyage, and he visited his old island, where there were promises of new adventures to be found in a later account.