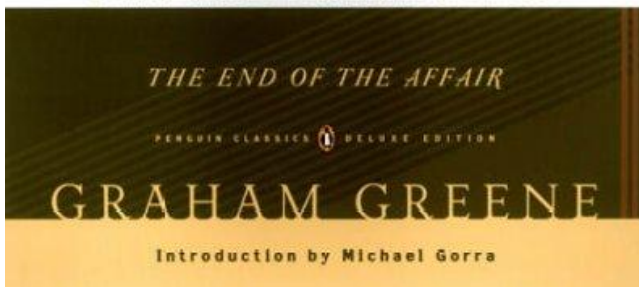


About the book...

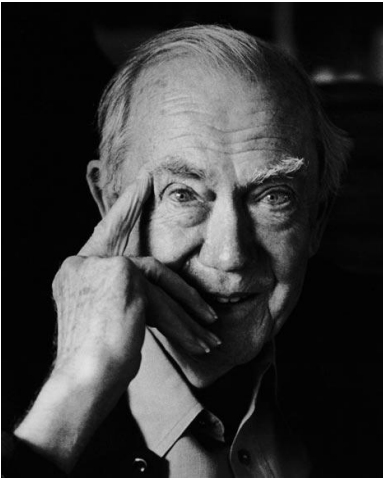


About the author...

In 1939, Sarah Miles, a wife of a civil servant, and Maurice Bendrix, a writer of some acclaim, meet at a party. Under the pretence of research for Bendrix's new novel they arrange a dinner date. At the end of the meal they kiss and this begins their affair. As they discreetly meet in Bendrix's room their love and fear is played out against the background of the World War II and the Blitz. Until one fateful day when a bomb explodes outside Bendrix's flat on and Sarah, without explanation, ends the affair.

Two years later, Bendrix sees Sarah's husband, Henry, on a dark rainy night on Clapham Common. Henry is in some distress over Sarah's recent erratic behaviour and reveals to Bendrix that he is thinking of having Sarah followed by a private detective. Bendrix offers to organise it for Henry, who promptly realises what an absurd idea it is.

However driven by his growing obsession with Sarah, Bendrix hires a private detective, Parkis, to discover who Sarah's current lover is. When Parkis obtains Sarah's diary it exposes her love for Bendrix and more importantly her struggle with her belief in God. The man that it was assumed she was having an affair with is a rationalist minister, Symthe, who is trying to convince Sarah that God does not exist. However his speeches have the opposite effect on Sarah and persuade her to convert to Catholicism. Shortly after this she becomes very ill and dies suddenly, leaving Henry and Bendrix bound together by their grief and desire to discover what they really believe in.



Henry Graham Greene was born on October 2, 1904 in Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire. He was the fourth of six children. His mother was Marion Raymond Greene, a cousin of Robert Louis Stevenson. His father, Charles Henry Greene, was headmaster of his high school, for which he was tormented by fellow pupils. After a number of unsuccessful suicide attempts he was sent to a therapist who encouraged him to write as a means of healing.

Greene went on to Balliol College, Oxford, where he studied Modern History. It was here that Greene gained experience as an editor at *The Oxford Outlook*; developed an interest in politics after joining the Communist Party; and honed his skills at writing, with one novel *Anthony Sant* complete before he graduated.

After graduating with a BA in 1925, Greene was employed as a subeditor at the *Nottingham Journal* after two abortive positions at other companies. He disliked Nottingham and later satirized its sleazy quarters in his novel *Brighton Rock*.

Greene moved on to a job as a subeditor at *The Times* in London. There he married Vivien Dayrell-Browning in October 1927 for whom he had converted to Catholicism. They had a daughter, Lucy Caroline, and a son Francis. After a number of years he gave up his much-loved job to become a full-time writer.

Greene began his world-renowned travelling in part to satisfy his lust for adventure, and in part to seek out material for his writing. A trip to Sweden gave him the

inspiration for *England Made Me*. An exhausting 400-mile trek through the jungles of Liberia not only gave Greene a near brush with death, but provided fodder for *Journey Without Maps*. During World War II, he worked for the Secret Intelligence Service in Sierra Leone, which became the setting for *The Heart of the Matter*. His journey to Mexico to witness the religious purges in 1938 was described in *The Lawless Roads*. Greene's horror of this Catholic persecution also led him to write *The Power and the Glory*, arguably the best novel of his career. It was both acclaimed (being the Hawthornden Prize winner in 1941) and condemned (by the Vatican). The frenetic globetrotting to troubled areas of the world continued until Greene was physically unable to do so in his later years.

Greene's financial success as an author enabled him to associate with many famous figures of his time: T.S. Eliot, Herbert Read, Evelyn Waugh, Alexander Korda, Ian Fleming and Noel Coward, among others. He had many extra-marital affairs, and confessed he was 'a bad husband and a fickle lover', although he never revealed his affairs in his two autobiographies. He separated from his wife in 1948 but they never divorced. Towards the end of his life, Greene lived in Vevey, Switzerland with his companion Yvonne Cloetta. He died there peacefully on April 3, 1991.

Reviews:

Amazon.com

Set in London during and just after World War II, Graham Greene's *The End of the Affair* is a pathos-laden examination of a three-way collision between love of self, love of another, and love of God. The affair in question involves Maurice Bendrix, a solipsistic novelist, and a dutifully married woman, Sarah Miles. The lovers meet at a party thrown by Sarah's dreary civil-servant husband, and proceed to liberate each other from boredom and routine unhappiness. Reflecting on the ebullient beginnings of their romance, Bendrix recalls: "There was never any question in those days of who wanted whom--we were together in desire." Indeed, the affair goes on unchecked for several years until, during an afternoon tryst, Bendrix goes downstairs to look for intruders in his basement and a bomb falls on the building. Sarah rushes down to find him lying under a fallen door, and immediately makes a deal with God, whom she has never particularly cared for. "I love him and I'll do anything if you'll make him alive.... I'll give him up forever, only let him be alive with a chance.... People can love each other without seeing each other, can't they, they love You all their lives without seeing You."

Bendrix, as evidenced by his ability to tell the story, is not dead, merely unconscious, and so Sarah must keep her promise. She breaks off the relationship without giving a reason, leaving Bendrix mystified and angry. The only explanation he can think of is that she's left him for another man. It isn't until years later, when he

hires a private detective to ascertain the truth, that he learns of her impassioned vow. Sarah herself comes to understand her move through a strange rationalization. Writing to God in her journal, she says:

You willed our separation, but he [Bendrix] willed it too. He worked for it with his anger and his jealousy, and he worked for it with his love. For he gave me so much love, and I gave him so much love that soon there wasn't anything left, when we'd finished, but You. It's as though the pull toward faith were inevitable, if incomprehensible--perhaps as punishment for her sin of adultery. In her final years, Sarah's faith only deepens, even as she remains haunted by the bombing and the power of her own attraction to God. Set against the backdrop of a war-ravaged city, *The End of the Affair* is equally haunting as it lays forth the question of what constitutes love in troubling, unequivocal terms. --
Melanie Rehak

The Independent (<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/the-end-of-the-affair-by-graham-greene-435551.html>)

Great romantic novels are about pain and hate, and among the greatest is Graham Greene's searing *The End of the Affair*. It is one of the most forensic and honest analyses of love you will ever read. The book is more powerful than the film partly because Ralph Fiennes looks too much the part of the romantic hero, whereas the character he plays, Maurice Bendrix, is an anti-hero, calculating, jealous, malicious and savage.

The novel enlarges the reader's understanding of love, a word which really should be divided into 20 subdivisions - most of which the novel explores. Passionate and cerebral, its prose meticulously mirrors the mind of its narrator. Though other great romantic books such as *Gone with the Wind*, *Pride and Prejudice* or *Jane Eyre* deal with the interplay between love and hate, *The End of the Affair* does so more openly. It even states it as a theme. "This is a record of hate far more than of love," Bendrix writes as he muses why he begins the novel as he does, on a black wet January night on the Common, in 1946. As the narrator, Bendrix at once gathers the reader into his loneliness. This is a thoroughly English novel, a novel of the rain and loneliness, yet it is also about tumultuous and terrible love.

It is not a perfect book, but its flaws help it to stay with you a lifetime. I like the change in tone when we read Sarah's diary, and her comment that Bendrix "thinks he hates, and loves, loves all the time", and the nerve it took for Greene to take the novel into a musing on the nature of divine love, and the cheek to suggest that Sarah might be becoming a saint. But what makes this novel transcendent are the moments when the rain and misery and hate suddenly stop and you see the moments of pure love. Greene's description of Bendrix seeing Sarah after two years is simply done, characteristically understated but with the emotion pushing against the plain words. "How can I make a stranger see her as she stopped in the hall at the foot

of the stairs and turned to us? I have never been able to describe even my fictitious characters except by their actions. It has always seemed to me that in a novel the reader should be allowed to imagine a character in any way he chooses: I do not want to supply him with ready-made illustrations. Now I am betrayed by my own technique, for I do not want any other woman substituted for Sarah, I want the reader to see the one broad forehead and bold mouth, the conformation of the skull, but all I can convey is an indeterminate figure turning in the dripping mackintosh, saying, 'Yes, Henry?' and then 'You?'" - By Sally Emerson

Discussion Questions

(<http://www.randomhouse.co.uk/offthepage/guide.htm?command=Search&db=/catalog/main.txt&eqisbndata=0099478447>)

1. 'A story has no beginning or ends' (p.1). Do you agree with this statement in regards to the structure of *The End of the Affair*?
2. Do you think that Sarah and Bendrix were in love or lust?
3. Is Greene correct when he says that the book only has two tones: 'obsessive love and obsessive hate'?
4. 'I write a story. How can you prove that the events in it never happened, that the characters aren't real?' (p.139) Do you think that book is based on

Greene's own experiences? Look at different aspects of the novel including:

- Bendrix, the author
- the bomb explosion
- Sarah's decision to convert to Catholicism
- the location of the book, Clapham Common

5. In *Ways of Escape* Greene laments of using the first person 'I' for *The End of the Affair*. Is he correct to think it may have been the wrong perspective to use? What benefits and disadvantages would the third person have brought to the novel? Which do you think is best to convey the emotional and religious struggle: first or third person narration?
6. Sarah claims that she is 'a bitch and a fake'. Does she hide her true self from everyone, including herself? Who do you think Sarah really is?
7. Sarah and Bendrix use the image of an onion as a code word for their love and it also becomes a metaphor for their affair. Do you think this is a good metaphor for the novel? Look at the way Bendrix reveals the story of their affair in retrospect.
8. Did Henry know about Sarah's affairs? Or was he truly blind to her actions?
9. 'War had helped us in a good many ways, and that was how I had almost come to regard war as a rather disreputable and unreliable accomplice in my affair.' (p.45) How important is the setting and

timing of the affair? Is the war an accomplice or an enemy?

10. a) Does Bendrix accept 'the possibility of God'? Or does God remain a mystery to him?
b) Does Sarah really work through her feelings about God?
11. Sarah sticks to two promises that she doesn't fully believe in: her marriage and her promise to God that if he saved Bendrix she would leave him. Does it seem believable that she would stick so unwavering to both? Why does she do it?
12. 'I look forward to these evening walks of ours,' Henry said.' (p.160) What do you make of Bendrix and Henry's relationship at the end of the novel? Is this the beginning of another kind of affair?
13. 'The film was not a good film, and at moments it was acutely painful to see situations that been so real to me twisted into the stock clichés of the screen.' (p.32) Bendrix considers the adaptation of his book into a film. Most films rely on the action, the visual and conversation to drive the plot. Do you think that a book that examines inner turmoil can be turned into a successful film? If you and your reading group have time watch one of the film adaptations of *The End of the Affair* so you can discuss whether you prefer the book or the film adaptation.

SUGGESTED FURTHER READING from Random House

(<http://www.randomhouse.co.uk/offthepage/guide.htm?command=Search&db=/catalog/main.txt&eqisbndata=0099478447>)

The Painted Veil by W. Somerset Maugham

The Easter Parade by Richard Yates

The Great Gatsby by F Scott Fitzgerald

Great Expectations by Charles Dickens

Under the Net by Iris Murdoch

On Chesil Beach by Ian McEwan

The Good Soldier by Ford Maddox Ford

The Life of Graham Greene, volumes 1 – 3 by Norman Sherry