

# Ethan from zeena film vs novel

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



In 1993, John Madden directed a movie version of Edith Wharton's novel Ethan Frome. Both the movie and novel is set in the fictional New England town named Starkfield and tells the story about a husband and wife who need an extra hand around the house due to Zeena's constant illness. In both versions, the character of Zeena Frome is portrayed as a sickly wife who displays a degree of hypochondria. Despite her physical weakness she, not Ethan, holds the dominant position in the household. The image of Zeena in the film is very similar to the Wharton's novel. However, the movie is different from the novel because Zeena is shown through different angles, perspectives; the emphasis of her character is much more exaggerated throughout the film, and the transition in her characteristics is much more evident. The movie Ethan Frome shows the character of Zeena Frome from many perspectives and angles, as opposed to the novel which only explores her from the manipulative, evil stand of point throughout the whole novel. For example, in the film the perspective of pre-marriage Zeena is shown which makes viewers feel sympathetic for her. The scene consists of multiple close ups between Ethan and Zeena which puts an emphasis on the relationship which is being built. Although this is so, it can be noted that Zeena seems to know her plan and use her fragility as a weapon from the very beginning, while Ethan was oblivious to the fake affection shown by Zeena. In contrast, the novel does not show any sympathy to Zeena at all and does not tell readers this manipulation within the household was all Zeena's planning from the beginning. Therefore, the movie was able to display a more sympathetic side to Zeena as well her evil intentions through the pre-marriage scenes. Another perspective of her character explored in

the film is jealousy. When Mattie is struggling with her trunk, intentionally identical to the pre-marriage scene, the expression of Zeena's face shows us that she is jealous and knows she will never receive the same affection as Mattie does. Another difference between the movie and book is the characteristics of Zeena is far more exaggerated in the film as opposed to the novel. This is mainly due to the fact that Wharton was only subject to descriptions while the film is able to show much more and therefore is much more powerful. For example, the movie makes Zeena to be far more aggressive after the discovery of the broken pickle dish. A scene which makes this evident is when Mattie is packing up her trunk and Zeena enters her room and says, " Before you lock it up, I want to see what you're taking. " This puts an emphasis on Zeena's control and really makes viewers aware who is in charge. While Zeena is saying this line in the film, the camera angle also supports this as the angle makes Zeena look big and in control. Another example the movie shows is Zeena yelling at Mattie, however in the novel it is not described whether she is yelling or not. In contrast, the film makes clear to viewers Zeena's control and dominance through the camera angles and dialogue, and therefore puts an emphasis on the character of Zeena, while the book is limited to description and therefore is not as impactful as the movie. Throughout the plot of Ethan Frome there are many events. The movie makes the transition of these events from Zeena's point of view much more obvious through exaggerating her actions. For example the difference between Zeena at the climax of the film, the discovery of the pickle dish and the ending of the film is very significant and obvious. Compared to the novel, this transition in her character is not as obvious as throughout the whole

novel she seems to maintain the same effect. Zeena is shown as to be in total control during the climax however at the end of the film it seems she no longer holds the dominant position of the household. This is made evident as at the closing of the film, Zeena is shown to tend to Mattie and her needs which tells us that Mattie has the power now, thus the roles of Mattie and Zeena have been reversed. In contrast, the novel does not make these transitions as clear. The novel leaves readers to think and fill in the 'gaps' while the film makes it so the intended effect is much more evident and clear to the viewers. Apart from this, the movie and novel are very similar in that Zeena is still portrayed as an evil brooding presence. While the film explores Zeena from many perspectives, the characteristics are exaggerated which in turn makes the transition of events from Zeena's point of view much more obvious. The ending is similar in both versions in that Zeena has put aside her imagined illness and over-developed sense of self-pity to care for Mattie and Ethan. Both the film and the novel make clear that Zeena will live out her life in silence and isolation.