

Ethan frome



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Ethan Frome In the novel Ethan Frome by Edith Wharton, Ethan Frome marries a woman who he is not completely in love with. As life goes on, as a result, he falls in love with Mattie, Zeena's cousin, when she comes to care for Zeena in her days of sickness. This was affected by three main themes in the novel. The first theme is isolation within oneself. Next, a theme from the novel is duty versus personal happiness. Finally, a theme from the novel is the surroundings and conditions of their location, and the effects these have on Ethan.

Ethan Frome is a man troubled with the isolation with which he is encompassed in, the choice between duty and happiness, and the affects of the gloomy weather of Starkfield. First, Ethan Frome is a man who is isolated within himself. Growing up, Ethan's mother fell sick and became a recluse who did not associate with anyone. This gave Ethan no one to talk to because his house was not located near town. His mom brought in Zeena to care for her while she was sick.

Being acclimated to having no one to talk to, Ethan married Zeena on a whim when she was about to leave. This occurred because Ethan isolated himself from other women, so when the opportunity came around, Ethan married Zeena. Unfortunately, Zeena fell sick as well. This caused Ethan to feel completely isolated within. It was said, " He did not even know whether anyone in the world felt as he did, or whether he was the sole victim of this mournful privilege" (pg 30). Ethan did not know if he was the only one to undergo the affects of being isolated.

Also, Frome felt the severe effects of isolation when Ethan, Mattie, and Zeena were living together for the second time. Mattie could not move away due to lasting injuries from her sledding accident with Ethan. The townspeople noticed this peculiar situation. One townspeople, or acquaintance of the three commented, " And the way I see it now, I don't see's there's much difference between the Fromes up at the farm and the Fromes down in the graveyard" (pg 157). She was saying that the equivalent to the actions that the three partake in is them being in a grave.

Ethan Frome leads a secluded, isolated life. Next, Ethan Frome has to decide between the choices of duty to his family versus his personal happiness. Ethan was faced with this when Mattie came to reside with Ethan and Zeena to take care of Zeena because the doctor recommended that she rest as much as possible. Because of Zeena falling sick and not speaking much, Ethan and Mattie's relationship began to thrive. Ethan found joy and happiness with Mattie, so he was ashamed that they had to hide their love for one another.

It was stated in the novel, " but he felt a pang at the thought that these two need not hide their happiness" (pg 69). Ethan chooses his duty to Zeena over the happiness he would receive if he could display his love for Mattie openly. Next, facing the choice of duty versus happiness when proposed with the option of moving to the West, he decides against his personal happiness because of what he owes to Zeena. He knows that she would not be able to support herself, and he would not be able to take Mattie with him.

Again, Ethan chooses between duty to Zeena and seeking his personal happiness when he and Mattie were going to take their lives so they would not have to live without each other. Throughout his time with Zeena, he was forced to choose between duty to his family and personal happiness. The final theme in the novel is the surroundings and conditions of their location and the effects that it has on Ethan Frome. The location of the farm could have been a reason why he married Zeena because when his mother was sick, Zeena was the only woman around.

Because of this, Ethan settled for her because she seemed favorable, but he did not actually love her. Also, the location of the farm has an effect on the novel because when Mattie came to live with them, Zeena insisted that she should take trips into town. It is said, "Zeena thought it best... not to let her feel to sharp a contrast between the life she had lived and the isolation of a Starkfield farm" (pg 28). She knew that Mattie should take trips into town, so she would not become isolated herself.

Zeena did not know, however, that this was the time that Ethan and Mattie had the opportunity to be their selves around each other and become closer. The weather of Starkfield is another factor in the novel. The snow made the treks into town difficult, so Ethan did not get off of his farm often. This caused him to stay at home with Zeena, who does not talk much, which caused him to fall in love with Mattie. The environment and the surroundings of the Frome's farm would cause Ethan to be isolated, and it would ultimately force him to choose between duty to his family and personal happiness.

Ethan Frome is troubled with being isolated, having to choose between duty to his family and personal happiness, and living with the surroundings and location of his farm. In Ethan Frome, the theme of isolation partakes in developing the story. Also, duty versus happiness has to be dealt with. Finally, the effects of the environment and surroundings have to be tolerated. Ethan Frome is a man faced with all of these challenges and it was up to him to overcome them.