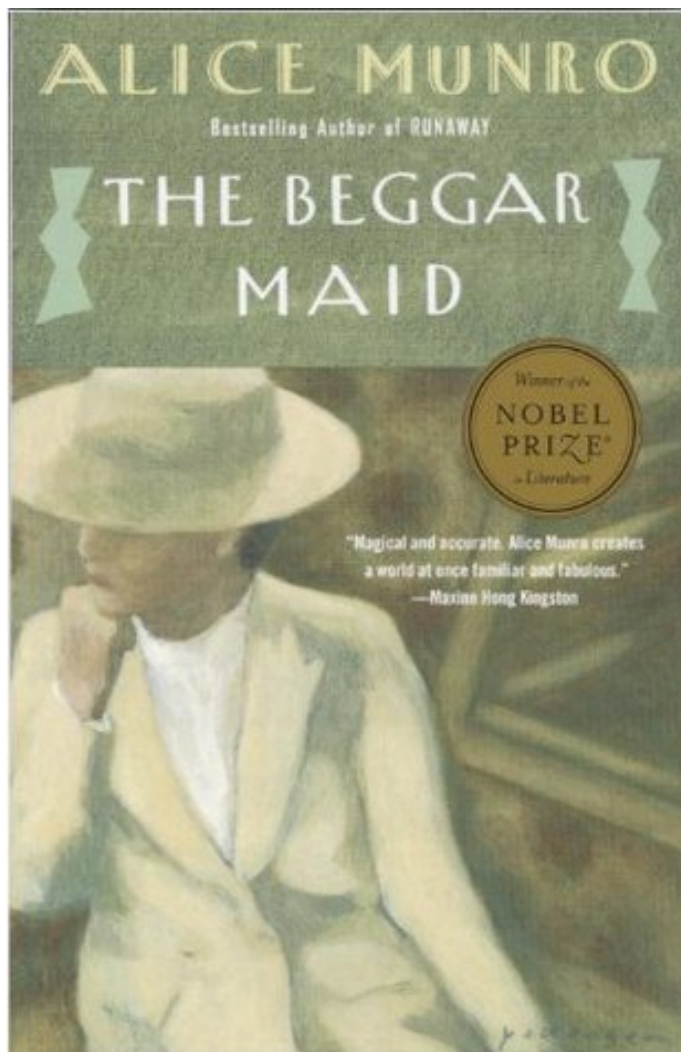


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## Alice Munro

### The Beggar Maid: Stories of Flo and Rose



Title: The Beggar Maid: Stories of Flo and Rose

Author: Alice Munro

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Pages: 228

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## Description

In this series of interweaving stories, Munro recreates the evolving bond between two women in the course of almost forty years. One is Flo, practical, suspicious of other people's airs, at times dismayingly vulgar. The other is Rose, Flo's stepdaughter, a clumsy, shy girl who somehow leaves the small town she grew up in to achieve her own equivocal success in the larger world.

## Insightful reviews

Marie: After I finished this book (home alone), I definitely said out loud "Alice Munro never disappoints!" Beautiful, complicated and all the things we imagine that we alone think and feel.

Vlad: I decided to read a work by Alice Munro purely because she won the Nobel Prize for Literature this year. I came in with modest expectations, since there are many past winners who I'm no admirer of. Sadly, even those were not met.

The book follows Rose, a girl growing up in severe poverty in the small Canadian country town of Hanratty and desiring more. Flo is her hard-working, flawed step-mother, who appears later on, but largely dominates the first third of the book. Each chapter has its own subject and meanders back and forth through time. In general, each new chapter is a chronological step forward.

Early on, when describing the impoverished town of Hanratty, Munro goes for a low-key, philosophical approach. While the writing itself is decent, and there is a high degree of realism, the events themselves are inconsequential and forgettable.

They lack the humor or excitement to make them entertaining. This, despite the tales being filled with violence, sex, and vulgarity. I usually love those three elements myself, so I was mystified at how Munro managed to make them so utterly boring. If anything, that might be her biggest strength as a writer.

At the same time, neither does the first third of the work offer keen insight, so anyone looking for an intellectually stimulating account of small-town life will be disappointed. Frankly, I found a lot of Munro's philosophical musings to be shallow and simplistic.

Once Rose moves out on her own, and Flo is largely forgotten, the book becomes a bit livelier. At the same time, while the enjoyment factor goes up, the realism goes down. For instance, certain philosophical observations seem flat-out wrong;

*Patrick disliked Clifford without knowing him because Clifford was a violinist; no doubt Clifford disliked Patrick because Patrick worked in a branch of his family's department store. In those days the barriers between people were still strong and reliable, between arty people and business people; between men and women.*

Perhaps this was true among the group of Canadian friends Munro had during the period of the

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50s and 60s; it certainly wasn't true during that same time in the USSR or the USA, (my birthplace and where I grew up, respectively) based on firsthand accounts.

Moreover, characters and situations go from realistic if exaggerated to buffoonish caricatures.

This is most evident in the description of Rose's husband Patrick and his wealthy family. Take every stereotype about out-of-touch, snobbish, ridiculous rich people you have ever seen in film and television comedies, and it still won't be as absurd as the punching bags Munro puts up. The novel goes out of its way to demean Patrick, making him seem comically inept, pathetic, and insensitive. I have known a lot of rich people, many of whom I dislike. Not one of them is even a fourth as ludicrous as Rose's husband.

Of course, this is by design, since it attempts to justify Rose's many horrible actions towards him and her daughter.

Which brings us to another major problem of the work. While we are meant to view Rose as a flawed and occasionally cruel person, we are nevertheless meant to sympathize with her, and even consider her a fundamentally good, decent individual.

I couldn't do that. In terms of her moral character, [\(view spoiler\)](#)

While not quite as nauseating, Rose's taste in friends and ideas makes her seem like a ridiculous idiot. She is drawn to the liberals and pseudo-intellectuals that populated the "thriving" (that's sarcasm, folks) Canadian art scene of the 50s and 60s. She considers them enlightened and just, and her husband Patrick, head of multiple department stores, an idiot for espousing sane, logical, but faintly conservative-sounding rhetoric at a party. I couldn't tell whether Munro was trying to make the endless stream of pompous English professors and hippy housewives Rose finds so cool seem ridiculous, or if that was my own distaste. At any rate, they are still portrayed far better than Patrick's family is.

And of course, in her actual life, Rose can't even follow those values. Munro briefly notes this hypocrisy in parts, but it's never treated as a serious blot on her character. In fact, that's why Munro later has Rose magically becoming a famous and successful actress, through no effort of her own. Rose has zero training or education in acting, and doesn't even have to look for a role without it dropping in her lap. Oh, and did I mention that Rose is not even supposed to be pretty? Well, screw the logic, Rose has to be an independent woman to be sympathetic, goddamn it!

Unfortunately, with me, that failed. I view Rose as both a horrible human being and an eye-rolling idiot. I can't sympathize with that.

*The Beggar Maid* is well-written, occasionally realistic, and more rarely, even moderately entertaining. (Although never those last two qualities together)

However, long stretches of absolute tedium (despite the vulgar, racy subject matter), an attempt at caricature when Munro had exhausted the initial ideas for the work, and the utterly



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Rose, e al mondo in cui vive, popolato da personaggi indimenticabili, come Patrick, nel quale "arroganza e modestia risultano stranamente esagerate", e Flo, scorbutica donna di provincia, che rappresenta un mondo da cui Rose vuole allontanarsi, ma a cui è indissolubilmente legata.

Micky Sahi: What do I think? i do not know. interpreting the 210 pages of sheer torture, i have never been in a position to work out what sort of somebody Rose quite was. Or what this tale is basically attempting to inform me. Rose grew up in West Hanratty together with her stepmother Flo and her father. Seeing her up-bringing and the shortcoming of a true reference to her family, i'd usually imagine that when she is out of there, she will be ok. I acquired hopeful and in a manner pleased with her whilst she obtained a scholarship and met Patrick. i presumed here's a girl attempting to get out of the concerns she confronted in her adolescence and now she has chanced on a guy who's stable to her. yet even that did not final long. even if Rose's dissatisfaction was once sensed much previous within the marriage, the writer did not placed mild on what the genuine challenge was, definite there has been fighting, whinge slapping and so on yet why? Her failed fling with Clifford made me imagine that perhaps now she may appreciate that Patrick is the single guy who will stand via her. yet Clifford's activities annoyed Rose to the purpose that she ended her marriage. So back we now have Rose the "damaged piece". the unusual factor is I felt sorry for Patrick greater than I did for her. She had the experience to say no him whilst he proposed she must have simply caught to her past decision. Then additional on i started to determine desire in her courting with Anne. I beloved the best way she attempted to re-establish herself by way of doing up her residence or discovering delight or balance in her new life. Calgary is a gorgeous place! But even that did not final long. She had loads of flings and off and on relationships and during all this I wasn't in a position to get the particular aspect of the entire story. the place is the ground line, the essence, what's Alice Munro attempting to say? Grhhhhh! Don't get me unsuitable the writer wrote well. yet there have been occasions the place she could change among the previous current and the prospective occasions that it acquired problematical and confusing. in any case she did not make Rose a like capable personality at all. And now coming to the end.... "HUH?" what sort of finishing used to be this? I had nearly cherished Rose coming to go to Flo on the end, yet for what? To do away with her at an aged care home? after which from outa no the place she starts off lacking an previous love she by no means as soon as pointed out within the e-book until eventually the final three pages..? oh please.... You comprehend this e-book made me wonder. i presumed the writer is asserting that in case you have an "effed up" formative years you're doomed for life. loads of us grew up in higher heart to reduce center households yet we did not all happen that bad? Did Rose ever love somebody except herself? Or is the writer attempting to say there's no such factor as precise love. the type of harm performed in the direction of the tip did not anything if no longer worsened my photograph of the story.

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