

# The Wedding Short Guide

## The Wedding by Danielle Steel

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# Characters

Allegra Steinberg, a beautiful, successful, entertainment attorney, is the main character of the novel, and complications in her life move the plot along. She seeks love and commitment from Brandon Edwards, but he is still married and refuses to get a divorce. Allegra's family and friends realize that Brandon is not the one for her; however, she stays committed to the relationship. While Allegra may be aggressive with her clients and in protecting her clients' best interests, she remains quite passive with Brandon. Brandon often cancels plans and abandons her emotionally. Allegra, though, never falters in her dedication to their relationship.

Allegra continues to believe in this false love until she takes a business trip to New York, where she meets young novelist Jeff Hamilton. Although there is an immediate attraction between the two, Allegra remains faithful to Brandon. After leaving New York, she decides to surprise Brandon in San Francisco, yet she is the one who receives the surprise when she discovers his betrayal. Although initially devastating, this affair allows Allegra to find true love with Jeff, who has temporarily relocated to Malibu to finish a book.

Jeff is exactly the kind of man Allegra wanted. He takes a deep interest in her and what she does, something Brandon never really bothered to do. He puts Allegra first and is willing to make sacrifices, both small and large, to make her happy. Although he wants to spend every moment with her, Jeff understands how important Allegra's work is to her, and unlike Brandon, he does not make her feel guilty for helping out her clients when they are in need, even though the calls may come in at 1:45 a.m.

Allegra and Jeff fall in love quickly and deeply, and soon after meeting, they become engaged and begin planning a wedding. The stress of maintaining two demanding careers and planning a wedding tests the bounds of their love, yet they manage to overcome the stress and grow closer together. This relationship epitomizes the idea of true love Steel explores as a thematic concern.

Allegra's family members also play a big role both in the plot and in the development of theme. Her parents, Simon and Blaire Steinberg, have an unusual marriage for a successful Hollywood couple—they have been married for years. Simon is a successful movie producer, and Blaire is the writer of a television series. While achieving success in their fields, the Steinbergs have raised three children: Allegra, a lawyer, Scott, a medical student, and Samantha, a model.

Blaire, beautiful, talented, successful, and intelligent, is a common Steel character type and the epitome of what Allegra wants to be in her life. She wishes to be a career woman, a wife, and a mother, and to be good at and fulfilled by all these roles.

Although Simon and Blaire continued to pursue their careers while raising children, their family life did not suffer. They maintained a close bond with their children and taught them the importance of family. Allegra certainly has a strong sense of family. This was



one of problems with Brandon; he did not value family much, Allegra's family especially, but Jeff bonds with the Steinbergs, so the relationship is bound to work.

What Allegra does not realize, though, is that her parents are going through a few problems while she is planning her wedding. Although still beautiful, Blaire feels that her age makes her less attractive to her husband. Furthermore, Simon's affair still stings her and causes her self-confidence to deteriorate. Planning Allegra's wedding and dealing with the pregnancy of seventeen-year-old Samantha create additional stress.

Despite all the complications, the wedding helps to bring Simon and Blaire closer together by helping them to rediscover their own commitment to each other.

The other Steinberg to play a somewhat major role in the novel is Samantha, Allegra's seventeen-year-old sister. Samantha attends high school and models part time under the name Samantha Scott to keep her famous lineage a secret. One of the major complications in the plot arises due to Sam's unplanned pregnancy. Seduced and abandoned by an older man, she turns to her sister in her time of need, and here the audience clearly sees the power of sisterly love between the two.

Her parents' fame has made Samantha's predicament dicier, for news of her pregnancy could erupt into a full-blown media circus. Although Sam initially feels pressured to follow her family's advice to give up the baby, she eventually makes her true wishes known and keeps the child to raise on her own. During her pregnancy, however, she has grown close to a former classmate, Jimmy, and the two marry shortly before the baby's birth. Blaire and Simon's loving commitment and ability to stick together through various ordeals have set a good example for Samantha; their relationship causes her to want to create and maintain a loving family of her own.

An additional wedding occurs while Allegra is planning her own. Alan Carr and Carmen Connors, two movie stars introduced by Allegra, fall madly in love, and after a hasty courtship, elope in Las Vegas.

All of these relationships, in some way, exemplify the power of love and a mutual commitment.



## Social Concerns

In *The Wedding*, Danielle Steel really does not explore any weighty social concerns, but she does highlight several issues of interest to her audience, which is mainly female readers. As she does in many of her novels, Steel examines the plight of the modern woman who tries to balance a career with romance. Allegra Steinberg, a twenty-nine-year-old entertainment lawyer in Hollywood, has a job that excites and satisfies her, but she cannot receive quite the same fulfillment with her long-time lover, fellow lawyer Brandon Edwards.

Allegra faces a problem that many modern-day career women face: they try to be "superwomen" to keep up in a highly competitive, male-dominated workplace. Her clients, who are all rock stars, actors, and actresses, demand much of her time and energy, yet she gives them her complete attention while desperately attempting to maintain a loving, supportive relationship with Brandon, a selfish man who refuses to divorce his estranged wife and offers Allegra little comfort and support. Undoubtedly, Allegra loves both her job and Brandon, and she willingly sacrifices everything for both, but neither her clients nor her boyfriend gives up anything for her. This predicament aligns Allegra with a nineteenth-century heroine rather than a twentieth-century career woman, for she, in essence, allows others to treat her as a second-class citizen whose wants and needs are unimportant. She facilitates Brandon's ill treatment of her by always putting his desires above hers and by completely losing herself in his overbearing shadow. Overall, she is unable to find a satisfying balance between her personal life and career, so she turns to a therapist, and briefly, the audience catches a glimpse into the function of psychological therapy in the journey to self-fulfillment.

Perhaps even more interesting is the behind-the-scenes peek into the lives of the rich and famous in Hollywood. Allegra's clients include actors, actresses, and musicians, and her own family includes a Hollywood producer and a writer. Perhaps the most effective part of this portrayal is that these individuals, although constantly in the spotlight and confronted with somewhat unusual difficulties, also deal with "normal" concerns. For example, Blaire Scott, Allegra's mother, is getting older, and, although in typical Steel style she is still beautiful, she wonders if she is losing her appeal. Her television show is no longer so popular as it once was, and she feels that her husband does not find her so attractive any longer. In a society so concerned with youth and flawless appearance, it is easy to understand how Blaire could feel this way in Hollywood, yet aging and loss of attractiveness are concerns for women all over.

The Hollywood setting also provides a backdrop for another issue Steel explores, though not at any great length—media coverage. A negative view of the press and of unceasing media coverage is most clearly exemplified through actors Carmen Connors and Alan Carr. As a young, beautiful, rising star, Carmen is constantly under media scrutiny. She cannot open her curtains without dozens of photographers taking pictures of the event. When she begins a relationship with the equally attractive and popular Alan Carr, the media coverage increases. Their lives are turned upside down because of the insatiable thirst for news concerning their private lives. This seems to bring up the



question, do public figures surrender privacy when they become public figures? Steel does not offer any answers to this question, but she does portray the issue from a perspective unknown to most readers.

Steel also addresses infidelity and its damaging effects. Brandon's unfaithfulness first crushes Allegra, yet it also opens the door for her to find true love. Allegra's parents also confront this issue. Simon had earlier betrayed Blaire, and Blaire has a difficult time coming to terms with this.

This is somewhat linked to Blaire's insecurity with her beauty, also, for Simon's mistress was quite a bit younger than he. Simon and Blaire drift apart and come very close to separating. For a period of time, both suffer severe blows to their self-esteem, and Blaire even experiences a creative drought.

Their life becomes a stark contrast to what it once was. However, the result here is positive also, for their marriage becomes stronger as they work through various feelings and doubts. The crises that develop call for them to work together as a team, and they discover that is what they do best: teamwork.

More briefly, Steel covers teenage pregnancy and anti-Semitism. Samantha, Allegra's teenaged sister, becomes pregnant by an older French photographer. Steel somewhat weakly explores the complexity of this issue, but she does offer some glimpse into the struggle Sam undergoes in determining what she will do given the situation. The options of abortion and adoption are briefly highlighted; however, Samantha decides to keep the baby. As is typical in a romance novel, this decision is the right one, and it all ends well.

Anti-Semitism appears in the form of Jeff's mother, who dislikes Allegra simply because of her Jewish heritage. Again, Steel does not delve deeply into this matter.

Whether it is teen pregnancy or anti-Semitism, the author does not thoroughly examine the complexity of the issues. Rather, both serve as minor disruptions or conflicts in the primary plot.



## Techniques

The details of the book are relayed to the reader through a third person, limited omniscient narrator. The narrator is an unnamed, all-knowing entity who relates the sensory experiences of the characters; however, this narrator primarily concentrates on Allegra. As a result, the reader learns the most about Allegra—what she is thinking, doing, saying, feeling, touching, tasting, and smelling. The thoughts of other characters are revealed, but mainly as they relate to Allegra. The limited omniscient narrative style allows for full development of other characters, but the fact that so many of the others' thoughts revolve around Allegra reminds the audience that she is, in fact, the main character. The Wedding is her story; it recounts her struggle to find something real and true in the plastic world in which she works; therefore, it is only logical that the narrator could focus so much attention on Allegra and what is happening in her inner and outer worlds.

The title, *The Wedding*, gives a very strong clue concerning the main plot of the novel, and very generally, Steel's novel covers, in chronological order, the meeting, courtship, engagement, and finally, wedding ceremony of Allegra Steinberg and Jeff Hamilton. The entire novel, however, is not made up solely of that story line. Several subplots involving Allegra's clients and family are developed, and these serve, in some way, as complications or conflicts in the main plot.

For instance, Allegra must arrange the secret wedding of major stars Alan Carr and Carmen Connors, deal with her sister's pregnancy, and renegotiate Bram Morrison's concert contracts before she can even begin to plan her own wedding. In the end, "the" wedding becomes three weddings. While there are these subplots, none of the events or characters is very far removed from Allegra; everything stems from her in some way.

In addition, there are no flashbacks or other variations on organization. However, some flashbacks may have been effective in filling the reader in on details concerning Simon's infidelity and Allegra's relationship with her biological father, a man she has had no contact with for years. Furthermore, Jeff's mother is somewhat weakly developed. She has very strong feelings against Allegra's Jewish heritage, yet there is little explanation for her beliefs. Perhaps further exploration of Mrs. Hamilton's concerns could lead to a better understanding of her character.

# Themes

The main theme of the novel is love and relationships, two ideas Steel often addresses in her work. Much of the main and secondary plots are developed around a search for love. Allegra thought she had found true love until she discovered Brandon's affair.

This discovery, however, is a good thing, for it allows her to break free of a stifling, cold, and unfulfilling relationship. She is then able to reap the bounty of true love with Jeff Hamilton, a man who supports her career choices and provides her with unconditional love. Through these two relationships, Steel illustrates how a good love match feeds the heart and soul while a poor match eats away at one's self-esteem and security.

In the subplot involving Hollywood stars Alan Carr and Carmen Connors, love is the great normalizer in their fast-paced, chaotic lives. Before they meet, they have successful careers that please them, but it is obvious that they do not really become wholly content until they find each other and fall in love.

The power of love is further explored through Simon and Blaire (Scott) Steinberg.

Blaire feels powerless, unattractive, and undesirable due to her husband's affair with a younger woman. The strength of the love they once shared, however, keeps them from separating, and it ultimately brings them even closer together. This couple truly epitomizes the cliché "love conquers all."

Also, when Allegra's teenaged sister Samantha is seduced and impregnated by an older, suave French photographer, love saves her from the fate of either giving up her baby or becoming a young single mother. Jimmy, a classmate, begins to visit her during her pregnancy. The two fall in love, and Jimmy marries her before the baby is born so that they can raise him together in a stable family.

Passionate love, however, is not the only kind of love examined here; rather, Steel portrays multiple levels of love. For instance, within the Steinberg family, familial love is obvious. Allegra, Scott, and Samantha, although prone to sibling squabbles now and then, obviously love one another very much. Scott remains concerned with his sister's happiness when Allegra is dating Brandon, and Allegra makes a genuine effort to help Sam when the teenager discovers she is pregnant. Overall, the three siblings remain supportive and helpful to one another and to their parents as well. They are a very tight-knit family that seems genuinely to enjoy one another's company.

Furthermore, Steel studies the love of friends through the relationships of several of the characters. Alan Carr remains one of Allegra's dearest friends, and most importantly, he gives her support Brandon is incapable of offering. This friendship leads to one of the love matches in the book, that between Alan and Carmen Connors. In addition, Allegra offers friendship to the families of some of her clients, most notably the family of Bram Morrison, the musician killed by a crazy fan.



# Adaptations

There are no known plans for a television or film version of the novel at this time.

The novel, read by J.R. Home, is available on both compact disc and cassette in abridged and unabridged versions.

## Key Questions

Steel's novels have an immense appeal to female readers. Her themes and characters often touch a powerful chord with the audience due to her ability to present characters who live in worlds somewhat far removed from the reader's environment though still able to have universal experiences.

1. Describe the character of Brandon Edwards based on his relationship with Allegra. How does his treatment of her reveal his true nature?
2. Does Allegra in any way facilitate Brandon's thoughtlessness, or is she a helpless partner in an unfulfilling relationship?
3. How does Steel develop the themes of love and relationships through the novel?
4. How does the setting lead to an understanding of the characters and their actions?
5. Which conflicts must Allegra and Jeff resolve before they can get married?
6. Does the novel explore the necessity of compromise in relationships? How?
7. What does the novel have to say about love in the 1990s?

## Literary Precedents

In many ways, *Steel* fits firmly into the same literary circle occupied by Jayne Ann Krentz, Jude Deveraux, and Nora Roberts— romance novelists. A romance typically has a predictable plot, which takes the reader on an emotional roller coaster ride. (Incidentally, in the nineteenth century, Nathaniel Hawthorne classified some of his great novels such as *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of Seven Gables* as romances, and one defining characteristic, to him, was the excess of emotion, or, in other words, the focus on "heart" rather than "head".) The structure of the plot is marked by love, tragedy, loss, healing, and new love, and in the end, the fairy tale "happily ever after" sentiment prevails.

Undoubtedly, *The Wedding* follows this plot structure, for Allegra did think she had found love with Brandon, but his infidelity ended their relationship. However, this loss awakened her to reality and to the opportunity to find true love with Jeff, and Jeff's unconditional love caused all old wounds and insecurities to heal. However, the characters and plot are developed more fully than is usual in a romance. The characters are developed beyond stock character or caricature, and the main plot breaks off into several subplots that eventually converge in the end. Additionally, love is often a major theme of romances, as it is in this work; however, *Steel* does not center her novel exclusively on passionate love. Instead, she explores the many manifestations of love, and she attempts to explore lightly some issues with social and contemporary relevance: teenage pregnancy, adoption vs.

abortion, career vs. personal life, marital relationships.

## Related Titles

The themes and the types of characters found in this book are similar to those in many of Steel's previous works. She often focuses on a beautiful heroine who finds fulfillment in her career but who is not so lucky in love.

The Wedding is somewhat reminiscent of *Family Secrets*, a novel that also offered a glimpse into Hollywood lives and families.

Unlike in *Family Secrets*, the main character here is not an actress. She knows the entertainment business, but from a completely different side.

Although a character like Allegra may have appeared in earlier work, it is obvious that Allegra Steinberg is a woman of the 1990s.



# Copyright Information

## Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults

Editor - Kirk H. Beetz, Ph.D.

Library of Congress  
Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults

Includes bibliographical references.

Summary: A multi-volume compilation of analytical essays on and study activities for fiction, nonfiction, and biographies written for young adults.

Includes a short biography for the author of each analyzed work.

1. Young adults—Books and reading. 2. Young adult literature—History and criticism. 3.

Young adult literature—Bio-bibliography. 4. Biography—Bio-bibliography.

[1. Literature—History and criticism. 2. Literature—Bio-bibliography]

I. Beetz, Kirk H., 1952

Z1037.A1G85 1994 028.1'62 94-18048 ISBN 0-933833-32-6

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Printed in the United States of America First Printing, November 1994