

Wives and Daughters Study Guide

Wives and Daughters by Elizabeth Gaskell

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Plot Summary

Wives and Daughters by Elizabeth Gaskell is a novel about young girl named Molly Gibson, who at the age of 17 gets not only a new step mother but also a very beautiful step sister. The novel follows Molly throughout the next couple of years of her life as she adjusts to the new circumstances of her life, and the many challenges it brings with it.

Molly Gibson is the main character of this novel. This novel takes place in England in the 1800's. When Molly was a small child her mother died leaving Molly to be raised with her father the town doctor. As Molly gets older her father sees the advantages to Molly having a mother to teach her how to be a young women and all the things he can't, so he marries a widow woman with a daughter about Molly's age named Cynthia. Cynthia is beautiful and charming and she and Molly become fast friends. Molly loves Cynthia and would do anything for her, that love is tested many times.

Before Molly's father marries Clare, Molly is becomes friends with a family in the neighborhood named the Hamley's. The Hamley's have two son's Osborne, and Roger. Osborne is everything Molly thought she could like about a boy and Roger was just the opposite of his brother. Molly and Roger become friends and Roger talks to Molly about books and science and teaches her things she has always wanted to learn. During one visit with the Hamley's Molly overhears and secret she wishes for years to come that she never knew. Osborne has secretly gotten married and wants her to help keep his secret from his father.

As Molly and Cynthia become closer Molly realizes that her new sister seems to have a power over most young men and they can't help falling for her charms. Roger Hamley would be no exception, and soon proposes marriage to Cynthia. Molly isn't sure why she isn't happy for her sister. But she is very jealous of the relationship between the two. Molly doesn't think her sister loves Roger the way Roger deserves to be loved.

While Roger is away in Africa, Molly finds out her sister has a secret. She is already engaged to another man. Cynthia had promised to marry another man when she only 16 and now she wanted out of the engagement and the man would not let her. Molly helped her sister at the risk of her own reputation. Some of the busy bodies in town saw Molly talking to him and they thought she was having an affair with him and Molly is the one who ended up the bad reputation. That is until Lady Harriet the daughter of the Lord and Lady of Hollingford stood up for her and cleared the air.

Cynthia calls off the engagement the day before Osborne Hamley dies. And when Roger comes to town to take care of the funeral business, and the matter of Osborne's secret wife and now 2 year old son, he realizes the love he was looking for was growing right in front of him all along. Molly Gibson.



Chapter 1-5

Chapter 1-5 Summary

Chapter 1, The Dawn of a Gala Day

Molly Gibson, the main character of this novel, is getting ready for the gala. The gala is an annual festival given by the Lord and Lady Cumnor. This year the Lord Cumnor himself has invited Molly to attend the gala. She is to be picked up with the Browning sisters, and taken to the Towers. The Towers is the estate the Lord and Lady live on.

Chapter 2, A Novice among the Great Folk

Molly arrives at the Towers and wanders around looking at the gardens and gets lost. Clare, the ex-governess for the Cumnor family, finds her. Clare gets her something to eat and takes her back to her room to rest but forgets to wake her up to catch the carriages home. Molly stays for dinner with the family in the Towers. Just before bed time Molly's father comes to pick her up and take her home.

Chapter 3, Molly Gibson's Childhood

In chapter 3 we go back sixteen years, when Mr. Gibson came to town as Mr. Hall's replacement. Mr. Hall had been the town doctor for many years and was now blind and deaf and rheumatic. Mr. Hall sent for an orphan grand-niece to keep him company in his old age, Mary Pearson. Mr. Gibson married Mary Pearson and they had Molly. Mrs. Gibson died of consumption when Molly was only 3 years old.

Mr. Gibson hired a cook, Miss Eyre, and Betty to help him care for Molly after her mother's death. Mr. Gibson also had two young men, apprentices, which stayed with them to learn their business.

Chapter 4, Mr. Gibson's Neighbours

Mr. Gibson introduces us to some of the people in his community. Mr. Gibson took in two young men, Mr. Wynne and Mr. Coxe.

Chapter 5, Calf-Love

Mr. Gibson finds a letter from Mr. Coxe to Molly professing his love for her. Mr. Gibson tells Mr. Coxe that if he gives him his word that he will forget about Molly and not talk about his feelings for her to anyone he will let him stay; Mr. Coxe agrees. Mr. Gibson makes arrangements for Molly to stay a couple of weeks with Mrs. Hamley.



Chapter 1-5 Analysis

Molly Gibson is the main character of this novel. Molly is the daughter of the town doctor, and her mother died when she young. She has been raised by her father with the help of a governess and other servants.

Molly is invited to a gala at the home of the Lord and Lady of Hollingford and Molly is very excited until she gets there and while on a long walk gets lost. Clare, Mrs. Kirkpatrick, finds her and takes her back to the Towers to rest and she gets left at the Towers. Molly only wants to get home, she is worried about what her father will think and she doesn't fit in with the people of the Towers. Molly is very relieved when her father shows up in the middle of the night to pick her up.

There is a patient of Mr. Gibson's, Mrs. Hamley, who is weak most of the time and she always wants Molly to come stay with her because she only has sons and they are at college and she is lonely. Mr. Gibson always makes excuses to Mrs. Hamley until one day when of the young men who are staying with Mr. Gibson writes a letter to the now 16 year old Molly professing his love for her.



Chapter 6- 10

Chapter 6- 10 Summary

Chapter 6, A Visit to the Hamleys

Molly arrives at the Hamley's she reads poetry with Mrs. Hamley, who is always a bit ill, and talks about Mrs. Hamley's sons, Osborne and Roger, who are away at school.

Chapter 7, Foreshadows of Love Perils

Miss Eyre, Molly's governess, has a nephew who has gotten scarlet fever. She needed to stay with him, so Mr. Gibson asked Mrs. Hamley if Molly could stay with her a while longer until Miss Eyre could get back. Mrs. Hamley was glad to have her stay but Squire Hamley on the other hand was not happy about it.

Chapter 8, Drifting into Danger

Roger Hamley came home from school, Osborne, stayed with some friends at Cambridge. Roger told his parents Osborne had not done as well at school as they had all hoped, his mother was upset and his father was very angry.

Lady Cumnor not feeling well and all her daughters now married with families of their own wanted someone to come stay with her, and her daughter Lady Harriet thought of Clare. Clare was running a girls school in Ashcombe to make ends meet for her and her daughter Cynthia.

Chapter 9, The Widower and The Widow

Mrs. Kirkpatrick comes to the Towers to be with Lady Cumnor. The Lady Cumnor asks Mrs. Kirkpatrick to call for Mr. Gibson because she isn't feeling well. After Mr. Gibson leaves he starts to think that maybe Mrs. Kirkpatrick would make a good step mother for Molly.

Chapter 10, A Crisis

When Mr. Gibson comes over to check on Lady Cumnor he proposes to Clare and she says yes. The next morning he goes over to Hamley to tell Molly the news of his engagement. She is very unhappy. She goes out by herself to cry about her father's upcoming marriage to Mrs. Kirkpatrick when Roger sees her crying and tries to help her. He talks to her about letting her father's happiness come before her own.



Chapter 6- 10 Analysis

As the time at Hamley passed Molly feel in love with Mrs. Hamley, and the Squire too for that matter. And they did with her, and when Molly's governess had to take more time off to take care of a sick relative Mrs. Hamley was thrilled to have Molly stay longer. The Squire was not as happy, his sons Osborne and Roger would be home from school and they were about Molly's age and he didn't want either of them falling in love with the daughter of a doctor no matter how much he liked her.

When the boys came home every one is surprised to find out that Osborne the older of the two had not done well in school and everyone had such high hopes for him. Osborne had always been the smarter, nicer looking, and all around favorite of both his parents. They loved Roger just as much but they didn't expect as much of him. Osborne did not come home right away he went with some of his friends abroad first, so only Roger came home.

Molly and Roger didn't talk much until Molly's father came to the Hall to tell her he had asked Mrs. Kirkpatrick to marry him. Molly was devastated and it was Roger who found her crying and did his best to talk to her until he was sure she felt some better. Molly thought it was very kind of him to take the time to talk to her the way he did.



chapter 11-15

chapter 11-15 Summary

Chapter 11, Making Friendship

Molly was asked to go to the Towers to meet her soon to be new step mother and have tea with Lady Cumnor. When Lady Cumnor meets Molly she suggests that Molly go back with Mrs. Kirkpatrick to Ashcombe until the wedding. Molly tells her she would like to have this time with her father before the wedding.

Chapter 12, Preparing for the Wedding

Mr. Gibson gives Mrs. Kirkpatrick money to pay for the wedding plans and to get Cynthia there in time for the wedding. He then calls on the Brownings to ask if they will not only let Molly stay with them until the wedding but also if they will help get his house in order before his new wife comes home.

Chapter 13, Molly Gibson's New Friends

She went with the Brownings to her house where Miss Browning was helping to make it presentable for the new Mrs. Gibson. Molly didn't like the changes.

Mr. Gibson and Molly went to stay the night before the wedding at the Manor House as guests of Lord Cumnor. Mr. Peston, the land agent for the Ashcombe property was there to greet them Mr. Preston talked to Molly about her soon to be new step sister.

Chapter 14, Molly Finds Herself Patronized

Molly rides to the wedding with Lord Cumnor and his daughter Lady Harriet, then after the wedding Molly is to ride back to Hollingford with Lord Cumnor and Lady Harriet while her father and new mother go off on their week vacation.

Roger Hamley comes over and brings a letter from his mother asking if Molly can come to their house on Thursday, that all the men would be out and she would be alone. Molly asks the Brownings if she may go, they agree.

While Molly and Mrs. Hamley are talking about poetry, Osborne comes in. They talked of poetry and language until Squire and Roger Hamley returned looking for Osborne.

chapter 11-15 Analysis

Mr. Gibson has asked the Miss Brownings to help him get his house decorated for the new Mrs. Gibson.



Molly and Mr. Gibson stayed at the home of Mr. Preston, the land agent at Ashcombe. He worked for Lord Hollingford. Molly didn't know what it was about him but she didn't like him at all. After the wedding Molly came home with Lady Harriet and her father. Lady Harriet really liked Molly. When Lady Harriet started making fun of Molly's friends the Brownings Molly told her what she thought about and Lady Harriet apologized and promised never to do it again. This made Lady Harriet like Molly even more.

Molly stayed with the Brownings while her father was on his honeymoon. While there Roger came over and said his mother wanted to see Molly and asked her to come visit. While at Hamley on this visit Molly finally got to meet Mr. Osborne.



Chapter 15-20

Chapter 15-20 Summary

Chapter 15, The New Mamma

The new Mr. and Mrs. Gibson's returned home. When Mr. Gibson came home Molly asked him if she had to call Mrs. Gibson 'Mamma' and he said it would make her new step mother happy if she would, so Molly agreed to do so in order to make her own father happy.

With in a short time of being in her new home the new Mrs. Gibson had managed to make it unbearable for the cook, and for Betty. Around this same time Mr. Coxe who had professed his affection for Molly earlier got a letter from an elderly uncle asking him to come stay with him or be cut out of his will, so Mr. Coxe also left.

Chapter 16, The Bride at Home

Mrs. Hamley was ill and could not go to the Gibson's home so she sent her sons, Roger and Osborne. Molly did notice that Osborne didn't look like himself.

The Squire came and he talked to Mr. Gibson about having Molly come to stay with him for awhile because his wife had gotten worse and was asking for Molly. Mr. Gibson had said that Molly could go with the Squire. Mrs. Gibson was upset that she was not asked so she refused to let Molly leave with the Squire that day, she made the Squire come back the next day to get her.

Chapter 17, Trouble at Hamley Hall

When Molly arrived at Hamley Hall Mrs. Hamley told her Osborne had not only failed his exams but he was also in a lot of debt. The Squire was angry and didn't know how he was going to pay back what Osborne owed and they had no idea what he spent the money on.

Mrs. Hamley got worse and finally Mr. Gibson sent letters to both Roger and Osborne Hamley to come home immediately that she didn't have much time. The anger the Squire felt toward Osborne had only increased as the collectors had come around the Hall trying to collect on Osborne's debt. Squire thought that Osborne had taken out an insurance policy out on him so that when the Squire died all of Osborne's debts would be paid

Chapter 18, Mr. Osborne's Secret

Roger Hamley is the first to come home, and he and Molly talk about Osborne and the Squire. Roger doesn't believe that Osborne has taken out an insurance policy on the



Squire, but the Squire won't listen to Roger. Molly and Roger both hope that when Osborne does come home that he and the Squire will make up.

On the last afternoon of her stay at the Hall Molly was in the library talking to Mr. Osborne when Roger came in with some mail. He didn't see Molly and tells Osborne the letter is from his wife. Molly finally knew the secret of why Mr. Osborne had all the debt and failed his exams. He had gotten married. Mr. Osborne asked her to keep his secret. A short time later Molly was sent home.

Chapter 19, Cynthia's Arrival

When Molly arrived home she learned that Cynthia was going to be there in the morning. She could hardly wait to meet her. The two girls became friends quickly.

Soon after Cynthia's arrival Molly got the news that Mrs. Hamley had died. Cynthia was there to comfort Molly after Mrs. Hamley passed.

Chapter 20, Mrs. Gibson's Visitors

Mr. Preston came to visit one day while Mrs. Gibson and Molly were home alone. Soon Cynthia came home and became apparent to Molly that Cynthia did not like Mr. Preston, and she wasn't sure Mrs. Gibson did either.

Mrs. Gibson sent an invitation to Mr. Osborne to come to dinner, he had refused but came by the house soon after to offer his apologies. Mrs. Gibson liked him and wanted him to meet Cynthia. Mrs. Gibson said that the next time she would have both men over for dinner. Roger for Molly and Osborne for Cynthia, this embarrassed Molly.

Chapter 15-20 Analysis

Molly was trying hard to remember all that Roger had said to her about her fathers' happiness but she just wanted everything to go back to the way it was before, just Molly and her father. However, Molly was very excited about having a sister.

Mrs. Hamley was ill again and wanted to know how Molly was making it with her new step mother but was too weak to make a visit so she sent the boys to check on her and to congratulate the Gibson's. Roger was watching Molly very closely because he knew his mother would want to know every thing about the way Molly acted. Molly noticed that Osborne was not looking well.

Mrs. Hamley got worse and Molly went back to the Hall to stay with the family. Not only were they dealing with the fact that it looked like Mrs. Hamley was dying, but something had happened with Osborne. He hadn't done any better in school and now he had all this unexplained debt. Mrs. Hamley got worse and soon didn't even know Molly was there and her parents made her come home.



When Molly got home she got a surprise Cynthia was coming home the next day. Molly and Cynthia hit it off from the start. Molly was very happy to have a sister. Not long after Cynthia arrived Mr. Preston showed up at the Gibson home, when Cynthia saw him Molly could tell she didn't like either.

It wasn't long after Cynthia was home that Mrs. Hamley died.



Chapter 21-25

Chapter 21-25 Summary

Chapter 21, The Half-Sisters

Mr. Osborne spent a lot of time talking with Mrs. Gibson. He would talk of absences from the Hall, and Molly couldn't help but think of the secret. Mr. Osborne didn't act like a married man.

The Miss Brownings had invited Molly and Cynthia to their house for tea and a round game afterwards.

When they arrived Roger was also there. When Roger was introduced to Cynthia he spent most of the rest of the evening talking to her.

When the girls got home they found out that Mr. Preston had come by for another visit. The man who was managing the Hollingford property is getting old and they are having Mr. Preston take care of it as well as the Ascombe property.

The next day Roger comes by the Gibson home to see Molly. He tells her that Mrs. Gibson has invited him and Osborne to dinner and he has accepted for the both of them.

Chapter 22, The Old Squire's Troubles

The Squire was having a really hard time with his wife's death. Whenever he was angry or restless she knew how to calm him down and make him feel better. If she were alive this thing between him and Osborne would be over by now.

One night over dinner he told Osborne that if he was not going to do anything to make any money the very best he could do was stop spending so much of it. And the Squire asked him about the insurance policy. Osborne tried to tell him it wasn't true, but the Squire wouldn't listen.

Chapter 23, Osborne Hamley Reviews His Position

Osborne realizes that as long as he stays at the Hall he wants for nothing meanwhile his wife is somewhere else and he needs to provide for her. He decides he is going to sell his poems.

Osborne Hamley's secret wife is from France, and that is why she must be kept a secret from his father.

Roger comes home and Osborne tells him of his plan to sell his poems. And asks Roger to talk to someone at Cambridge to help him get them published, and Roger agrees.



Chapter 24, Mrs. Gibson Little Dinner

When Roger and Osborne came to dinner at the Gibson's home Roger spends most of the evening talking to Cynthia.

Chapter 25, Hollingford in a Bustle

The Hollingford Charity Ball was an annual ball the benefit the county hospital to the three counties surrounding Hollingford.

On the afternoon of the ball the Hamley boys sent nosegays over to Molly and Cynthia. Then some flowers were brought in for Cynthia. Molly asked who they were from and Cynthia showed her the note, it was from Mr. Preston. He had asked her to save him a dance. Cynthia threw his flowers in the fire.

Chapter 21-25 Analysis

During this time Osborne Hamley spent a lot of his time visiting at the Gibson home. But things were still very tense between Osborne and his father. The Squire thought that Osborne had taken out an insurance policy on his life to pay off his debts.

When Roger comes home Osborne talks to him about helping him get some of his poetry published so he can make some money and go get his wife and move away.

Mrs. Gibson likes Osborne and thinks he would make a good husband for Cynthia. She invites Roger along for Molly. She is hoping that the two Hamley men will be going to the Charity Ball so she lets Molly and Cynthia go to the Ball.



Chapter 26- 30

Chapter 26- 30 Summary

Chapter 26, A Charity Ball

At the dance Molly and Cynthia had a nice time they danced most dances.

Chapter 27, Father and Son

Roger Hamley had written an article that had just been published in a scientific periodical, and Lord Hollingford had requested that he come for dinner at the Towers with them and meet with some man who was wanted to talk to him about the article. Squire Hamley was in one of his moods when he heard of the invitation and was very upset about him going so Roger declined the invitation.

Osborne tells more about his wife, Aimee, and how he meets her.

Chapter 28, Rivalry

After the ball Cynthia seemed to become ill Mrs. Gibson became upset with the amount of visits that Roger paid the Gibson home and one particular morning when he came earlier than Mrs. Gibson thought exceptable, she told him so. Roger apologized and said he would not call so early again.

Chapter 29, Bush-Fighting

When Osborne returned home this time he was not well. He ran into Mr. Gibson one day and was talking to him about his condition and Mr. Gibson gave him a quick check and asked him to come to lunch at his home. Osborne asked Mr. Gibson not to mention any of this to his father.

Osborne came to call at the Gibson home and Mrs. Gibson made a big deal out of the fact that she knew Roger was home and hadn't come to call on them yet. And she knew it was because of what she had said and she was so sorry and she even sent a note by Osborne telling Roger how sorry she was and he was welcome any time at their home.

Chapter 30, Old Ways and New Ways

The Squire got word that one of his old servants was dying and had asked for him to come see him, so the old squire went to see the old man. While visiting the old man the Squire had an altercation with Mr. Preston about a drainage system and vowed to himself that he would find the money to get his own system working.



Chapter 26- 30 Analysis

The girls and their parents go to the Ball but the Hamley men are not there.

Shortly after the ball Cynthia becomes ill. Roger begins spending more time around the Gibson home hoping to help her feel better. Mrs. Gibson gets angry on one occasion because she doesn't like how close the two have become. She doesn't want Roger to marry her daughter because since he is a student and the second born he doesn't have the chance to have the wealth that Osborne has. She welcomes Osborne any time he comes, but on this occasion she is tired of the amount of time Roger is spending with Cynthia so she gets on to him about the fact that he came so early.

When Osborne comes home he runs into Mr. Gibson and tells him he hasn't been feeling well and Mr. Gibson asks him to come for lunch at his house with him and Dr. Nicholls. When he does come the two doctors disagree about what is causing his illness. Osborne doesn't want his father to know he has been to see the doctors because he thinks it has to do with his travel also and that only starts more fights between father and son. After the men had finished their meeting Mrs. Gibson made a point of asking about Roger and even going as far as to send a note apologizing for her behavior the last time he was there. As we find out later Mrs. Gibson was listening to the men talking about the condition of Osborne, and she knows he isn't well. However she didn't stay to hear what both doctors thought was wrong. She only heard her husbands concerns.



Chapter 31-35

Chapter 31-35 Summary

Chapter 31, A Passive Coquette

Cynthia seemed to be a little more depressed now, and Roger was always there for her. Mrs. Gibson seemed to be encouraging this relationship

Roger was working on something to make money so he could be with Cynthia and help his father with his debts and his drainage system.

Chapter 32, Coming Events

Roger wanted to make sure that the marriage between his brother and his French wife was legal, so he made arrangements to have them remarried by ministers of both of their religious beliefs.

When Lady Harriet came by for a visit Mrs. Gibson found out that Roger was being sent to Africa on a scientific journey by Lord Hollingford.

Chapter 33, Brightening Prospects

Mr. Gibson was not sure if he should tell Roger about his brother's illness or not.

Mr. Gibson went to Hamley Hall to talk to the Squire about Roger going to Africa but the conversation quickly turned to whether or not there was anything romantic going on between the two Hamley boys and the girls in the Gibson home. The Squire was very concerned that Osborne marries someone who had standing and money of her own. And did not want him to marry one of the Gibson girls. Mr. Gibson said he knew nothing of romance but if he did he would let him know.

Chapter 34, A Lover's Mistake

Roger Hamley comes over to the Gibson home before he leaves for Africa and proposes marriage to Cynthia. He tells her he will not hold her to the promise while he is gone, but he will hold himself to it. Cynthia agrees to marry him but asks that they keep it a secret until he comes home from Africa. Mrs. Gibson is very happy about the news, but Molly is heart broken, she doesn't believe that Cynthia loves Roger.

Chapter 35, The Mother's Manoeuvre

Mr. Gibson comes home and his wife is telling him that Roger has proposed to Cynthia. Mrs. Gibson tells Mr. Gibson she overheard him and Dr. Nicholls talking about Osborne's condition and she knows he is ill. That's why she's been so nice to Roger and so eager for him and Cynthia to be together. But Mr. Gibson tells her that Dr. Nicholls



doesn't think there is anything serious wrong with Osborne, and she is now trying to find a way to back out of the engagement.

Mr. Gibson tells his wife and Cynthia that he has to go tell the Squire about the engagement because he had made the promise to him just days before that he would let him know if he heard of any romance. The Squire takes it better than Mr. Gibson had hoped and by the end of their conversation he invited all three women to lunch.

Chapter 31-35 Analysis

Roger is working trying to find a way to make more money. He wants to make sure that Osborne's marriage to Aimee is legal now that they are having a child. So he sits it up so that they can be remarried in the churches of both of their religions so there is no question that it is a legal marriage.

Roger is being sent to Africa by Lord Hollingford on a scientific journey for two years and he decides to propose to Cynthia and she accepts but asks him to keep it a secret until he returns. Mrs. Gibson is very happy by this news. Well Mrs. Gibson had only heard her husband telling Dr. Nicholls that he thought Osborne was ill and it was serious, she didn't hear Dr. Nicholls say that he thought it was only the stress of all the traveling. So she thought Osborne was going to die and that would make Roger next in line for the family fortune, and that's what led to her change of heart concerning Roger. When Mr. Gibson found out what his wife had done he was furious with her.

Mr. Gibson had to tell the Squire about this news because just recently the two men were talking and Mr. Gibson told the Squire there was nothing romantic going on, but if he heard of that changing he would let him know.



Chapter 36-40

Chapter 36-40 Summary

Chapter 36, Domestic Diplomacy

The Squire asked the ladies to come to lunch.

Later Mr. Gibson talked to Molly about how the lunch went and he asked her there was anything going on between her and Osborne and she assured him there was not.

Chapter 37, A Fluke, and What Came of It

One day Mr. Coxe came back to town. He had inherited his uncle's estate and had come back for Molly. But when he saw Cynthia it didn't take long for Mr. Coxe to fall in love with her. He asked Mr. Gibson if he could talk to Cynthia about marrying him and Mr. Gibson tried to tell him that she was engaged but he insisted that he thought she loved him back. Of course Cynthia told him no and he left, but Mr. Gibson was very upset with her for leading Mr. Coxe to believe she had feelings for him, and told her so. Cynthia could not stand for Mr. Gibson to be so upset with her.

Chapter 38, Mr. Kirkpatrick, Q C

Cynthia's uncle, her father's brother was coming to town on business and he was going to stay a few days with the Gibson's.

Mr. Kirkpatrick really liked Cynthia and after he had left he told his wife they needed to have her come stay with them again, so she sent a letter asking her to come. Cynthia didn't want to go because she said she didn't have any new gowns and she couldn't go to London in the ones she had. Mrs. Gibson questioned her about where all her money had gone from her allowance, but she wouldn't say. Finally Mr. Gibson tells her mother and Molly he will give her some money to buy new things.

Chapter 39, Secret Thought Ooze Out

Molly tells Cynthia that her father is going to pay for the new things she needs to go to London, and Cynthia is very happy.

Mrs. Gibson lets it slip out that she thinks that Osborne is ill, and that Roger could get the inheritance if Osborne was to die.

Chapter 40, Molly Breathes Freely

Molly is very excited to have her father all to her self while her step mother and sister are in London. She does all the things she did before Mrs. Gibson came along, that she



is not permitted to do now. The only problem was all the ladies of the neighborhood felt they must entertain Mr. Gibson and his daughter in Mrs. Gibson's absence.

One day while Molly was visiting the Brownings they asked her if she saw a lot of Mr. Preston. She said no, but when she was gone Miss Browning said that Mrs. Hornblower had told her that she saw Mr. Preston in Heath Lane with Cynthia, but that Molly was so tall now Miss Browning was sure it was Molly she saw and not Cynthia. And she vowed to watch over Molly and not let her end up with the likes of Mr. Preston.

Chapter 36-40 Analysis

When Mr. Gibson returns from his visit to the Squires he tells them that the Squire invited them to lunch. Mrs. Gibson immediately said she wouldn't be able to go. And Mr. Gibson got angry. In the end all three ladies went to Hamley and had a nice lunch with the Squire, and Cynthia made a good impression on him as well.

Later when Mr. Gibson questioned Molly about whether or not she had feelings for Osborne she blushed because she knew Osborne was already married and her father was afraid she did. Molly assured him that she only thought of him as a brother.

When Mr. Coxe came back to town to make good on his feelings for Molly he was quick to change his mind when he met Cynthia. After a few days visiting the Gibson home he asked Mr. Gibson if he could ask Cynthia to marry him. Cynthia refuses him and he leaves, Mr. Gibson is very angry with Cynthia for leading Mr. Coxe on to believe he had a chance.

Cynthia's uncle Kirkpatrick comes to visit and when he leaves asks for her to come stay in London with his family. Cynthia acts very strange, she wants to go but says she doesn't have the money to buy any new clothes and she can't go in the old things she has. Her mother can't figure out where all her money is going, but Mr. Gibson gives her the money to go.

Mrs. Gibson had decided to go with Cynthia to London. On one evening at the Miss Brownings they told her that one of the ladies in town had seen Mr. Preston with Cynthia. Molly couldn't believe this could be true for one she knew how much Cynthia disliked Mr. Preston. Molly put it out of her mind, but assured the sisters it wasn't Cynthia seen with Mr. Preston. When she left Miss Browning wondered if the reason Molly would be so sure it wasn't Cynthia was because it was Molly meeting him.



Chapter 41-45

Chapter 41-45 Summary

Chapter 41, Gathering Clouds

Mrs. Gibson came home from London where she had a wonderful time, and some time later Cynthia returned also.

Molly and Mrs. Gibson were talking to Miss Brownings and she was telling Mrs. Gibson that Molly needed to be watched carefully and that she was doing so because she was a friend of Molly's mother Mary. Mrs. Gibson took offense to all of this because she always made sure she did the same for Molly as she did for Cynthia. But Miss Browning was talking about the Mr. Preston situation she thought Molly was involved in, and was trying to send Molly a message that she would not allow a marriage between the two of them and would stand up in church if need be. Mrs. Gibson took all this as Miss Browning was saying she was not a good step mother and was very angry and told her so.

Chapter 42, The Storm Bursts

One day Mr. Gibson had taken Molly out with him and she was walking home alone when she came across Cynthia in the woods with Mr. Preston. Cynthia was crying and Mr. Preston would not leave her alone. Molly asked what was wrong and Mr. Preston said Cynthia had promised to marry him and now was trying to get out of it and he wouldn't allow it because he loved her. Molly asked Cynthia to explain what was going on and she said she just wanted to get home then she would tell her everything.

Chapter 43, Cynthia's Confession

When they finally got home Cynthia told Molly the whole story. Years earlier when Cynthia was not quite 16 Mr. Preston had loaned her money and asked her to marry him when she turned 20, she had said yes, but since then she had changed her mind and had been trying to pay him the money she owed him to get out of the engagement but he refused. Molly said she would help Cynthia get the letters he was holding confirming her pledge to marry him and return the money Cynthia owed.

Molly wanted to tell her father so he could help with the situation but Cynthia said she would rather leave and be a governess in Russia than to have Mr. Gibson know what she had done, especially after what he had said to her after the Mr. Coxe situation. So Molly promised not to tell any and to help Cynthia get the letters back.

Chapter 44, Molly Gibson to the Rescue

Cynthia gets a letter from her cousin telling her that her other cousin Helen is sick with the flu. Mr. Gibson says they should ask her to come and stay with them for a while to



help her feel better. Mrs. Gibson doesn't think they have room but says she will write to them and let them know he made the offer.

Cynthia wants Molly to help her get the letters back from Mr. Preston, so she sets up a meeting with him at a rode near the Towers and Molly goes to meet him. Mr. Preston says he will not give back the letters he intends to marry her as soon as she turns 20, and the letters are going to make sure she goes through with it. Molly tells him that if he doesn't give the letters back she is going to tell Lady Harriet what he is doing and have Lady Harriet tell her brother Lord Hollingford to get the letters back for them. Mr., Preston knows he will lose his job if Lord Hollingford finds out what he's been up to, but before he can say anything Mr. Sheepshanks comes along and sees the two of them talking and Molly goes back home. When she gets home she tells Cynthia she doesn't think she did any good, but Cynthia thanks her anyway for trying to help her.

Chapter 45, Confidences

Mrs. Gibson receives a letter from Mrs. Kirkpatrick asking for Cynthia to come stay with them in London to help cheer up Helen because she is still sick. Mr. Gibson agrees to take her with him because he has to go to London to see Lady Cumnor also, while Molly helps Cynthia pack Cynthia asks her to give Mr. Preston the letter with the money in it. Molly says she will.

While Cynthia and Mr. Gibson are in London Mrs. Gibson gets word from Lady Cumnor that she wants some books from the Towers and asks Mrs. Gibson to get them for her. While Mrs. Gibson is at the Towers Osborne comes to the Gibson home looking for Mr. Gibson because he is still very ill and doesn't know if he is getting worse or if it is just from the worry of all of his secrets. He tells Molly about his wife and where to find her; he even writes down her address and tells Molly to hide it. Then he tells Molly that he also has a child, but before Molly can ask any questions Miss Phoebe Browning comes in.

Chapter 41-45 Analysis

On one of her walks she came upon a child who had fallen Molly stopped and picked it up and took it to its mother. Just then she heard Cynthia's voice in the woods. She found Cynthia there in the woods with Mr. Preston. Molly finally found out Cynthia's secret and understood why Cynthia acted the way she did towards Mr. Preston. When Cynthia was 16 she had borrowed money from Mr. Preston and he had asked her to marry him, at the time Cynthia liked him and thought he was a nice man and told him she would marry him. Before she had decided she wanted to end the engagement she had written him several letters talking about their engagement and about how she felt about her mother who she had always been upset with for sending her away to school all her life. Cynthia never felt like her mother wanted her with her and was never there when she needed her. Mr. Preston was using these letters to make her marry him. In them she had promised that when she turned 20 she would marry him and now she was 19. Cynthia had saved all her money for so long to try to repay him the money he



loaned her thinking that he would take the money and let her out of the engagement. But now he wouldn't take the money he only wanted to marry her. Now it made sense to Molly why Cynthia didn't have the money for the new clothes for London, she was saving all her money so she could be free of Mr. Preston.

Molly felt sorry for her sister and agreed to help Cynthia get her letters back from Mr. Preston. Molly went to town one day to meet with Mr. Preston. He told Molly that if Cynthia didn't marry him, he was going to show the letters to Mr. Gibson. Cynthia was more afraid of Mr. Gibson knowing that she had gotten herself into this situation than anyone, besides she didn't want her mother to read the letters and know what she had said about her. Finally Molly told him she would tell Lady Harriet and have her tell her brother Lord Hollingford, Mr. Preston's boss, and Lord Hollingford would get the letters back. He doesn't want Lord Hollingford to know any thing about this so he's going to give back the letters but before he can do it someone comes by and sees the two of them talking, and Molly goes home.

Just before Cynthia is to leave to go back to London she receives the letters that Mr. Preston has been holding all these years. Cynthia wanted Molly to try to give Preston back his money while she was in London.

Osborne came for a visit one day while Molly was home alone and told her about his wife and told her he had a child now. He wanted to make sure if anything happened to him someone would know how to find her, and with Roger in Africa Molly was all he had left and after all these years she was like a sister to him. Before Molly had the chance to question him about his child Miss Browning came in and Osborne left. That would be the last time Molly ever saw Osborne Hamley.



Chapter 46-50

Chapter 46-50 Summary

Chapter 46, Hollingford Gossips

Miss Phoebe asked Molly if she wanted to go to the bookstore with her. She got the letter with the money in it just in case she saw Mr. Preston, which she did as soon as she walked into the bookstore. Miss Phoebe left before Molly could give the letter to him, but once they were outside Molly told Miss Phoebe she would be right back and ran inside and put the letter in his hand and was out the door before he knew what had happened. Mrs. Goodenough saw her do it.

One evening some of the ladies of Hollingford were playing cards and Mrs. Goodenough told all the ladies that Molly was sneaking around with Mr. Preston. Some of the other women had heard stories of the few times Molly had seen Mr. Preston when she was trying to help her sister and they all thought that Molly and Mr. Preston were having an affair.

Chapter 47, Scandal and Its Victims

When Mr. Gibson returned from London Molly told him that Osborne had come to see him and that he thought he was worse and Mr. Gibson said he couldn't go then but he would go later.

All along the town was gossiping about Molly and Mr. Preston, he had even heard but done nothing to stop it. The Miss Brownings had not been told yet because the ladies were afraid of her temper, but the newcomer to town Mrs. Dawes let it slip to Miss Phoebe one day and she went home and told Miss Browning. They didn't want to think it was true but Miss Browning went and talked to Mrs. Dawes and she convinced her she was telling the truth so Miss Browning sent word for Mr. Gibson to come to her house as soon as he could. He came that night and she told him all she had heard. He did not believe any of it, but said he would talk to Molly,

Chapter 48, An Innocent Culprit

When he got home he asked Molly and she only told him that she had met with Mr. Preston in the places where the ladies had said but not for the reason they thought. She didn't tell him the whole story but he thought it had to do with Cynthia.

Chapter 49, Molly Gibson Finds a Champion

Lord Cumnor came home and told the family of the gossip going around the town about Molly and Mr. Preston. Lady Harriet did not believe it and one day she and her father were out and she saw Mr. Preston and she asked him about all of it and he told her the truth about him and Cynthia and that Molly was only a messenger between the two



when Cynthia was breaking off the engagement with him, but he asked them to keep it in confidence. Lord Cumnor went home and told his wife and other daughter. A few days later Lady Harriet showed up at the Gibson's home and since Mrs. Gibson was sick with the flu she took Molly for a walk all over town so all the ladies could see the two of them together. When she brought Molly back she told her to tell her step mother that Lady Cumnor would like for her to come to the Towers to stay a few days when she felt better.

Chapter 50, Cynthia at Bay

When Cynthia came home from London Mrs. Gibson was feeling better but still not well enough to stay at the Towers. She got a letter for Mrs. Kirkpatrick telling her that Cynthia had been proposed to by Mr. Henderson and she had refused him. Mrs. Gibson was upset because she thought he would be a better husband for her than Roger because he had more money.

A short time later Mrs. Gibson went to stay with at the Towers with Lady Cumnor and over the course of being there Lady Cumnor told Mrs. Gibson the whole story about Mr. Preston and how Cynthia had been engaged to him all these years. When she got home she asked Cynthia about it and she told her it was true, when Mr. Gibson came home he realized that Cynthia had been the one Molly was protecting and was upset with Cynthia. Cynthia was very upset that Mr. Gibson had found out her secret. Cynthia ran up to room and would not let Molly in when she tried to come up and comfort her. She asked her to go away and so Molly did

Chapter 46-50 Analysis

Miss Phoebe stopped by to see if Molly wanted to go with her to the book store, so she got Cynthia's money for Mr. Preston just in case she ran into him. When Miss Browning and Molly got to the bookstore Mr. Preston was there but before Molly could figure out how to give it to him Miss Phoebe was ready to leave. When they got out in the street Molly excused herself and ran back inside the book store and shoved the letter in his hand and ran out before he knew what she had even given him. But on her way out Mrs. Goodenough was coming in the store and had seen her put the letter in his hand. Mrs. Goodenough wasn't the only one who had seen Molly taking to Mr. Preston. And by now they were all telling each other their stories. Soon Molly was the talk of the town and how shameful it was for her to be sneaking around with Mr. Preston. Soon enough the gossip reached Mr. Gibson and he went straight home and had a talk with his daughter. She told him she was not having an affair with Preston, that she was only giving him messages for someone else. Molly couldn't tell him it was for Cynthia because she had promised her she wouldn't. But Mr. Gibson felt sure Cynthia was behind this any way.

When the gossip found it's way to the Cumnor family Lady Harriet took it upon herself to find out the truth . She went to Preston who told her he was not romantically involved with Molly but with Cynthia. Then she took Molly around town so every one could see



the two of them together. When she brought Molly home she invited Mrs. Gibson to come to the Towers to stay for a while.

When Mrs. Gibson went to the Towers Lady Cumnor mistakenly told her all about the whole affair with Mr. Preston and Cynthia. Mrs. Gibson came home early very upset by what she had heard. When Cynthia found out that every one knew about every thing she was so upset that she wanted Mr. Gibson to help her find a family somewhere far away that needed a governess.



Chapter 51-55

Chapter 51-55 Summary

Chapter 51, Trouble Never Comes Alone

When Molly came back Cynthia told her and Mrs. Gibson she had written Roger letters telling him the engagement was off, then she went and asked Mr. Gibson if he would help her find some place else to live as a governess because she couldn't bare to live with him now that he knew this about her. He asked her to give it a day to think it over and then he left, and he sent Molly in to comfort her sister. Just then a messenger came in and asked for Mr. Gibson they said they were from Hamley and that Osborne had died.

Molly told them to find her father and she left immediately to go to the Squire. When she got there he was just sitting with Osborne so she just came in and sat on the floor next to him.

Chapter 52, Squire Hamley's Sorrow

Some time later Mr. Gibson came to Molly and she asked him if she could stay the night and he said she could, but before he left Molly told him about Osborne's secret, about his wife and child.

When morning came Mr. Gibson and Molly talked with the Squire and Molly told him all she knew about the secret wife and child. Molly went home and got clothes and the address that Osborne had given her of his wife and she would come back and stayed with the Squire, and the Squire looked to see if he could find any legal papers or letters about this marriage.

Chapter 53, Unlooked-For Arrivals

Molly goes back to Hamley to stay with the Squire. He has found all the letters and the marriage licenses and knows it is all true, but he's not sure what to do about it. He also finds out the child is a boy and is named after him.

Molly wants to make sure Mrs. Osborne Hamley knows of her husbands death, and her father tells her she may not even know he has been ill and it would be too big a shock to just send the letter saying he was dead, so he tells her to send one letter telling her he is very ill then send the next telling her he has died. Mrs. Osborne receives the first letter and packs her son up and heads to Hamley to care for her ill son. It's not until she gets to the Hall that she finds out that Osborne is dead and she passes out. They take her upstairs to a room to lie down and she asks them to feed the baby and then she passes out again.

Chapter 54, Molly Gibson's Worth is Discovered



When Mr. Gibson arrived Molly told him she thought Mrs. Osborne would not eat, or drink or speak to anyone and she just lay in bed and stared at the wall. The day before the funeral Mrs. Osborne lost all consciousness. Molly stayed on at Hamley to help with the direction of treatment and diet for Mrs. Osborne.

Molly had worked so hard taking care of everyone at Hamley she hadn't taken care of herself and her father took her back home just before she became ill. Cynthia was not there when she returned because she had gone back to stay with her cousins in London for a while.

Mrs. Gibson did not tell Cynthia that Molly had become ill, but Lady Harriet had written Cynthia a letter and had mentioned seeing Molly and she seemed to be better than before and the next day Cynthia came home to be with Molly. Molly's health improved with Cynthia home although she would still be very weak though the rest of the summer she was improving.

Chapter 55, An Absent Lover Returns

Roger returned to Hamley, but he had not come to call on the Gibson family. Mr. Gibson had seen him at the Hall and Roger had told him he wanted to talk to Cynthia face to face about her ending their engagement, and since she was still in London he did not feel comfortable calling on them until she came home and they could talk. Mr. Gibson told this to Molly but kept it from his wife so she would not tell Cynthia that Roger wanted a meeting with her. Mrs. Gibson told her daughter that Roger was home and that was all.

When Cynthia came home her mother wanted to know if Mr. Henderson had asked her again to marry him now that she was free to accept, and Cynthia told her no. When Molly and Cynthia were finally alone Molly told her that Roger wanted a meeting, and Cynthia was not happy. She did not want to have to tell Roger about Mr. Preston.

Chapter 51-55 Analysis

Cynthia wrote Roger a letter and called off the engagement. While Molly was trying to make her sister feel better, a messenger came in looking for Mr. Gibson with the news that Osborne Hamley had died.

Molly went straight to the Hall to be with the Squire, and wait for her father to come. When Mr. Gibson did come Molly told him Osborne's secret and they decided that they would tell the Squire all about it in the morning. When they did tell him the Squire was sure that keeping this secret from him all this time is what killed him. The Squire wanted to find the child and bring him to live with at the Hall with him.

Molly sent a letter to Aimee telling her that Osborne was very ill and was sending the letter that told of his death a few days later. She didn't want to shock her with Osborne's death because she didn't know if Aimee even knew he was sick. But when Aimee received the first letter she packed up their son and came to Hamley Hall so she could



take care of her husband. When she got to the Hall and asked for Osborne she knew he was dead when she saw Molly's face and she passed out. The Squire had her put upstairs in a room and that is where she stayed the rest of the time Molly was with the Hamley's.

Molly had spent so much time taking care of everyone at the Hall she hadn't been taking care of her self, and one day when her father came to check on Mrs. Osborne Hamley he saw how his daughter was doing and took her home at once. Molly was very ill for quite some time but was never in serious condition or near death so Mrs. Gibson didn't tell Cynthia, who was still in London, any thing about it. Lady Harriet sent a letter to Cynthia and mentioned Molly's illness not knowing that Mrs. Gibson had not told Cynthia. When Cynthia heard she came home the next day. Everyone was surprised to see her but Molly was very happy to have her home. Mr. Gibson was touched that she would drop everything and come as soon as she heard. Cynthia had gained back some of the affection she had lost from the Mr. Preston mess with Mr. Gibson.

Roger came home from Africa to settle things after Osborne's death. He hadn't come to see Molly yet because he wanted to see Cynthia and talk to her about why she broke off their engagement. So he had waited until Cynthia had returned from London.

Mrs. Gibson was very hopeful that since Cynthia was no longer engaged to Roger that Mr. Henderson would ask her to marry him again. Mrs. Gibson thought Mr. Henderson would make a good husband for Cynthia because his family had money and he was a lawyer



Chapter 56-60

Chapter 56-60 Summary

Chapter 56, Off with the Old Love, and On with the New

Roger had heard Cynthia was back from London and came over to talk about their engagement. While he was waiting for her to come home he saw her out the window in the garden talking to Mr. Henderson he left before she could come in. He knew she was engaged now.

They decided to have the wedding in London because Mr. Henderson wanted a quick wedding and Mr. Gibson thought with all the engagements Cynthia had had lately Hollingsford would not be the place for this wedding.

Chapter 57, Bridal Visits and Adieux

Lady Cumnor and Lady Harriet came to the Gibson home to congratulate Cynthia, and on one visit Lady Harriet saw that Molly was sicker and would not be able to go to London so she offered to let her stay at the Towers.

Chapter 58, Reviving Hopes and Brightening Prospects

On the day of Cynthia's wedding Lady Cumnor was having guest to dinner and when Molly came down she was shocked to see Roger. Roger was also shocked; he had not seen Molly look so beautiful

Both Molly and Roger spent most of the evening talking to other people but wishing they could only talk to each other. Roger found himself jealous of the other men who were spending more time with Molly.

The next day Roger found Molly and he tells her that his father is wanting her to come back for another visit.

When her parents returned from London Molly told them of seeing Roger at the Towers and that the Squire had invited her to stay and help with Aimee.

Chapter 59, Molly Gibson at Hamley Hall

Molly goes to the Hall and Roger falls in love with her.

Chapter 60, Roger Hamley's Confession

Molly had left the Hall just in time because the little boy had scarlet fever and Molly had never had it before, and the rest of the family had to be quarantined. Meanwhile Roger was preparing to return to Africa because he still had six months left to finish his work



One day Roger saw Mr. Gibson and he asked him if he could stop by the Gibson home before he left for Africa to say good bye to Molly. Mr. Gibson would not let him because of the scarlet fever. As they were talking Mr. Gibson realized Roger had feelings for Molly and asked him about it. Roger admitted he did, but said he was not going to act on them until he came back from Africa. Mr. Gibson questioned him a bit about how he could be sure since it wasn't so long ago he thought he loved Cynthia. Roger assured him this was much different and he wanted to prove it to Molly if she would give him the chance. Mr. Gibson told Roger happier.

On the day Roger was to leave Mrs. Gibson noticed someone standing outside by the road and asked Molly if she knew who it was standing in the rain. When Molly went to the window she saw it was Roger. He was waving good bye to her before leaving. Molly waved and kissed her hand and watched as Roger left.

This is where the story stops because the author Elizabeth Gaskell died before she could finish the novel.

Chapter 56-60 Analysis

Roger comes to see Cynthia and is talking to Molly when Mr. Henderson is proposing to Cynthia in the garden and Roger sees it. He leaves before Cynthia knows he's there. She accepts Mr. Henderson's marriage proposal and he wants to get married quickly. Mrs. Gibson doesn't want to have the wedding in Hollingford since Cynthia has to ex fiancés in the town so they decide to be married in London. Molly plans on going with them but at the last minute she gets worse and her step mother makes arrangements for her to stay at the Towers with Lady Harriet.

While staying at the Towers the Cumnor family is hosting several other people among them Roger Hamley. Molly is so happy to see Roger she's always felt so comfortable with him and enjoyed hearing him teach her about the scientific things, but on this night she doesn't get the chance she wants to talk with him. And for the first time Roger looks at Molly as a young woman and not a sister. Lady Harriet has had someone fix her hair and she is wearing the dress she was supposed to wear for Cynthia's wedding. Roger has always loved Molly but he's always thought of her as part of his family. Now he sees the woman she's becoming, the woman Osborne told him she would become. Osborne told him when he was in love with Cynthia that Molly was so much more Than Cynthia would ever be. Roger knew his brother was right. Roger told her of the troubles at Hamley and how Aimee and his father were no closer than they were when she first came to the Hall, and he thought Molly could help bring them together.

When her parents returned from the wedding she asked if she could go and after some thought her mother said she could. Molly had heard some of the ladies in Hollingford talking about Molly going to stay at the Hall and how Roger was now the heir to the family and that Mrs. Gibson was trying to get Molly married to him. This made Molly very uncomfortable and she kept her distance from Roger while at the Hall. Roger



thinks it's because she knows he is falling in love with her and she is upset because he was just engaged to Cynthia a few weeks ago.

When she leaves the Hall it's because Aimee's son has scarlet fever and Mr. Gibson doesn't want Molly to catch it. Roger isn't allowed to go see her while the child is sick with the fever, and by the time the little boy is better it is time for Roger to go back to Africa. He wants to talk to Molly about his feelings before he leaves but he decides to wait until he gets back from this trip to talk to her but he would like to say good bye to her before he leaves. Mr. Gibson won't even allow him to stop for a quick good bye and while Roger is pledging his case Mr. Gibson realizes this is more than just wanting to say good bye, and asks him about it and Roger confirms his suspicions.

On the day Roger is to leave town Mrs. Gibson notices some one has been standing outside their house in the rain for some time and asks Molly if she knows who it is. Its Roger, he's been waiting outside hoping she would come to the window and he could at least see her face and wave to her before he left for Africa. And when Molly came and waved and kissed her hand to him he turned and left. This was one of the most romantic things Mrs. Gibson said she had ever seen.

This is where the novel stops, the author died before finishing this book but we are led to believe that Molly and Roger were indeed married.



Characters

Molly Gibson

Molly Gibson is the main character of this novel. When we are first introduced to her she is a child getting ready for her first formal event at the Towers. And very quickly she is 17 years old and her father is worried that she needs a mother to guide her in this time of her life.

Molly is smart and well educated even though she comes from a doctor and her mother died when she was very young. She isn't as obviously beautiful as her step sister but she is very pretty, and everyone loves her. She makes a good impression on all she meets. She speaks her mind even if that may seem rude to some she doesn't bet around the bush and is very straight forward. She has learned that from her father. She loves her father very much and was not at all happy when she learned he was getting married. She enjoyed having him all to herself.

Molly loves having her new sister but soon realizes that too comes with a price. Molly has always thought of the Hamley's as part of her family, but as Cynthia gets closer to Roger, or rather Roger to Cynthia, Molly can't understand her jealousy towards her sister. All along you can see the feeling Molly has for Roger building as Molly herself seems to write them off as feelings for a brother. Molly is very loyal, however, to Cynthia when she finds out that Cynthia has gotten herself into the situation with Mr. Preston and without hesitation offers to help her get out of it.

We do not know for sure how the love story ends but are led to believe that in the end Molly does end up with her love Mr. Roger.

Roger Hamley

Roger Hamely is the second son of Squire and Mrs. Hamely. He is the plainer of the two boys and the one that everyone expected the least out of. He was only given the same opportunities as Osborne so he couldn't some day come back and blame the Squire for not amounting to anything. But it turned out that Roger is the one who did all the things that was expected of Osborne and more. He was a great scholar and writer. He enjoyed scientific books and enjoyed talking to Molly about these things.

Roger fell in love with Cynthia Kirkpatrick and proposed marriage to her before he was to leave for two years for Africa. He told her she was not bound by the promise but he would be and she asked him not to make it public, and he agreed to all. While he was gone Cynthia changed her mind and sent him a letter telling him the engagement was off he received the letter the same day he got word his brother Osborne had died. He made arrangements to come home right away



Soon it became clear to Roger that the love he was looking for had been right in front of him all along. Molly Gibson was everything he wanted and more. But now he didn't know how she could ever believe him after he had professed his love for her sister only a short time ago. He decided not to tell her then but to wait until he got back from this last trip to Africa and talk to her about it then.

Hyacinth Clare Gibson

Mrs. Gibson is Molly's step mother. When Molly is 17 her father marries Clare who used to be the governess for the Lady Cumnor. When Molly's mother was still alive Clare had gotten scarlet fever and Mr. Gibson had been her doctor. She has a daughter, Cynthia, who is Molly's age. Mrs. Gibson is an attractive woman whose first husband died not long after they married, and she was left to raise her daughter alone. She had been the governess for the Cumnor family so she was accustomed to nice things that she could not afford herself. After her husband died she became the head mistress of the girl's school at Ashcombe.

Mr. Gibson

Mr. Gibson is Molly's father. He is also the town of Hollingford's doctor. He is Scottish. He was not a very affectionate man, his only term of endearment for his daughter was Goosey. But he had a close bond with Molly none the less.

Cynthia Kirkpatrick

Cynthia Kirkpatrick is Mrs. Gibson's daughter from her first marriage. She is Molly Gibson's new sister, and best friend. She and Molly became friends the instant they met. She was sent away to school when she was a child after her father's death. She has always thought she would have been a different person, a better person, had her mother taken the time to be with her and raise her, instead of raising other people's children.

Cynthia is very beautiful and sweet and knows how to make everyone fall in love with her. And this talent gets her into problem more than once in this novel. But with the help of her new sister, Molly, things seem to be turning around for Cynthia.

Osborne Hamley

Osborne Hamley is the oldest son of the Squire and Mrs. Hamley. He was the son they thought so highly of, and were so disappointed in when he failed his studies and then refused to give any explanation as to why or where all the money went.

He had married a French girl and had used his money to set her up over in London, but would not tell his father because the girl had no money and she was French, Catholic



and he knew his father would disapprove of her and he was afraid of his father. So he kept this secret and it eventually led to his untimely death.

Squire Hamley

Squire Hamley is the father of Osborne and Roger Hamley. He is a stubborn old man who never finished his education, and has let that be his down fall. He wouldn't let his son's have friends over the Hall when they were young because he was worried about what they would say about the old Squire not being so smart. He always had that chip on his shoulder that people though he was not good enough even though his family had been there longer than any family around. But he was the one who thought his family better than most, because it was this that kept Osborne from telling about his French wife and son. He didn't even want either of his son's to fall in love with Molly who he cared for like a daughter, because her father was only a doctor. Finally after Osborne died he was able to let all of that go and be content that Molly would make Roger happy.

Miss Browning

Miss Browning is one of two sister who live near Mr. Gibson and Molly in Hollingford. Their father was the vicar and they used to be friends with Molly's mother Mary.

Miss Phoebe Browning

Miss Phoebe Browning is one of two sisters who live near Mr. Gibson and Molly. They feel as though Molly is a part of their family.

Lady Harriet

Lady Harriet is one of Lord and Lady Cumnor's daughters. Mrs. Gibson was her governess when she was a girl. And she has taken to Molly because Molly says what she feels to Lady Harriet and does not edit what she thinks because of Lady Harriet's status in their society like most everyone else does.

Mrs. Hamley

Mrs. Hamley is the mother of Osborne and Roger Hamley. She is also the Squire's wife. She was from London before she married the Squire and after they were married she stopped taking trips back to visit in London because it upset him so much. She was the calming force in their family, and after she died their family had a very difficult time relating to one another. She had a child, a daughter, die at birth, and she loved Molly like she was her daughter.



Lady Cumnor

Lady Cumnor is the Lady of the Hollingford Manor. She was the employer of Mrs. Gibson before she was married the first time to Mr. Kirkpatrick.

Lord Cumnor

Lord Cumnor is Lord of the Hollingford Manor, and married to Lady Cumnor. He never passed anyone that he did not ask them some sort of question although he never really cared to hear the answer, he was just making small talk.

Lord Hollingford

Lord Hollingford is the son of Lord and Lady Cumnor. He is also a friend of Mr. Gibson.

Mrs. Goodenough

Mrs. Goodenough is another one of the Gibson's neighbors. She has known them for years and is one of the town busy bodies. She is one of the ladies that helped spread the rumors of Molly and Mr. Preston.

Mr. Preston

Mr. Preston is the land agent for the Ashcombe property and then he becomes the land agent for Hollingford when Mr. Sheepshanks retires. He is the man who was trying to force Cynthia into marrying him.



Objects/Places

Hollingford

Hollingford is the town in which the novel takes place. It is based on the town the author, Elizabeth Gaskell was raised from the age of 13 months.

Molly's Home

Molly's home is where she and Mr. Gibson have lived all of Molly's life. It is also where her father has his surgery, when he had the young men who were interning with him stayed. When he married Mrs. Kirkpatrick, she and Cynthia made it their home also. Most of the story takes place inside the Gibson home.

Hamley Hall

Hamley Hall is where the Hamley's live, it has been in the Squire's family for many years. No one in the town of Hollingford can remember a time when the land didn't belong to the Hamley's.

The Hollingford Towers

The Towers is where the Cumnor family lives. It is where Mrs. Gibson lived before she was married, and where she first met her soon to be step daughter Molly. It is also where Molly goes to stay while the rest of her family is at Cynthia's wedding.

The Charity Ball

The Charity Ball is where Molly first began to suspect there was more than a friendly relationship between her new sister and Mr. Preston.

London

London is where Cynthia's Aunt and Uncle Kirkpatrick live and often ask her to visit them there. This is also where she meets her husband to be. Osborne also keeps his wife and son in London, and travels back and forth to see them.

Ashcombe

Ashcombe is where Mrs. Kirkpatrick, Mrs. Gibson, was living as a school mistress before Mr. Gibson asked her to marry him. This is also where Mr. Preston worked as



manager of the property for Lord Cumnor before moving to Hollingford to succeed Mr. Sheepshanks.

Whig Family

The Whig family refers to the Cumnor family, a political party in the 18th century thought of itself as progressive, having defended constitutional monarchy against Stuart Catholicism.

The Brownings Home

The Brownings home is where the two Miss Brownings' live together. They are the neighbors of the Gibson's. Molly and Cynthia are invited over to the Brownings often for tea and parties.

The Manor House

The Manor House is where Mr. Preston lived when he was at Ashcombe, and where Mr. Gibson and Molly stayed when Mr. Gibson married Mrs. Kirkpatrick.



Themes

Love is Blind

Molly and Roger have known each other for years. They met when Molly was younger and Roger only saw her as a sister. Roger used to talk to Molly about books he had read or animals and bugs he was studying in college. To Molly he the teacher she looked forward to his visits so she could learn what he was learning. He was blind to the young woman she was becoming. Roger even proposed marriage to Molly's step sister Cynthia who Molly really loved too. She was always loyal to Roger telling herself the feelings she felt toward him were feelings you feel toward a brother, but she couldn't help being jealous of the attention he paid Cynthia. After one and one half years being apart while Roger was in Africa, Roger comes home and finally sees Molly for who she is not the girl she used to be. Realizing the love he has always felt for her, and she him. They were right in front of each other their whole lives and never did they know the love that would come to them later on. This illustrates how love is completely unpredictable. It can be found anywhere, and realized at any time in a person's life. For Roger and Molly it was found after Roger proposed to her sister.

The Love of a Sister

Molly loves her sister Cynthia so much that she is willing to do whatever it takes to help her out of a mess she's gotten herself into with Mr. Preston. Cynthia borrowed money from him when she was 16 and he asked her to marry him when she turns 20. Cynthia agreed at the time, but then wanted out of the agreement. Molly then decided to help her end the affair with Mr. Preston and in the process Molly ends up the gossip of town, everyone thinks she is the one having the affair. Molly could have explained the situation and cleared her own name, but she chose to keep her sisters secret and let the gossip die down. Out of common sisterly love Molly gave up her reputation so that her sister would not have to suffer her whole life in a loveless marriage. Family is one of the most important things in a person's life and Molly clearly showed the importance of a relationship with your sister in this novel. Love should not be underestimated and your family should not be left in the shadows, they can sometimes be what turns your life around.

Effects of Secrets

Osborne getting married while in college and not telling his mother and father, because he was afraid of what his father would do or say was not a smart idea. The Squire wanted Osborne to marry a noble girl with money of her own, Instead he went off and married a French servant girl. He had to use his school money to take care of his new wife and his father thought he had taken out a life insurance policy on him, so that when he the squire died all of Osborne's debts would be paid. This secret drove a wedge



between father and son that stayed until Osborne died at an early age, partly the cause for his early death was the stress of keeping this secret and trying to make enough money to care for his wife and child. The life Osborne could have had, that included his love and his child and his father could have been marvelous and happy and long. It was however cut short by a lie. Life his too precious to ruin with secrets and deception, as Osborne finds out the hard way. He lost valuable time with the people he loved. He hurt many lives with his own death and it could have been changed had he not chosen to keep such a huge secret from his family. We learn the importance of honesty with Osborne and are shown the drastic consequences when you are not.

Style

Point of View

The point of view of the novel is third person. This point of view is omniscient; narrator not only knows the event she reports upon, she also can tell the reader what each of the characters feels. This point of view is important to the novel because the reader knows not only that Molly did something but what is the emotion behind what she did.

The story is told through mostly the narrators point of view which helps to move the story along more quickly. This helps us to understand the situations surrounding the main events that are taking place better, and to better give us the background needed to understand the reasons why the characters are the way they are. This novel is told through the eyes of the people who are living in Hollingford, but we only get a glimpse of life through their eyes when they are in Hollingford, when they are out of town we only know that they are gone and it isn't until they come back and tell us that we know what has gone on.

Setting

The setting for this novel is a town in England called Hollingford; it is based upon Knutsford a town in Cheshire where the writer Elizabeth Gaskell grew up. In this novel the setting of the book never changes, the characters may go from place to place but it is all within this town for the most part. When the characters do leave Hollingford, we do not hear from them until they return.

Molly leaves her home, and goes to spend time with Mrs. Hamley at Hamley Hall. She stays there while her governess is taking care of a sick relative, and by the time she comes back to stay at her home again her father has changed it because he has asked Mrs. Kirkpatrick to be his wife and he wants her to feel comfortable there.

Molly and her father stay at The Manor House with Mr. Preston when Mr. Gibson goes to Ashcombe to marry Mrs. Kirkpatrick.

Molly stays with Lady Cumnor at the Towers when she is too ill to go with her father and step mother to London for Cynthia's wedding. And then shortly after that she goes back to the Hall with the Squire because his new daughter in law and grandson have come and Roger is hoping that she could help make them all get along better

Language and Meaning

The language of this novel is very formal as was the language in 1800's, and it does take some getting used to, and does seem to slow the reader down a bit. But it also



adds a great deal of interest to story. This language is used not only by the chapters but by the narrator as well.

Most of the novel is told in narration, but when the dialogue is used the language helps to tell the station of some of the characters of this novel. The higher the station in life the better their speech is, but those characters that are at a lower station in life are easily recognized by their speech. It is hard to tell how much time has past during the chapters and the narrator always tells it she is going back in time even if by a day. If not for this point of view it would be much harder to follow along.

Structure

This novel is comprised of 60 chapters each chapter is between 10 and 20 pages long. Each chapter has a title that tells something of what the reader will learn in that chapter. The chapters tend to be full of information and details about the time of year or the mood of the persons, and it is not often clear how much time has past between chapters, but it is always noted if we are taken back a day or two in time.

The plot of *Wives and Daughters* is simple and has no sub plots. Molly Gibson is a 17 year old girl who lives with her widowed father. When he remarries she must learn to share not only her life but her father with her new step mother and step sister, Cynthia. Molly and Cynthia become fast friends, and before long Molly is helping Cynthia keep a secret from the one person Molly cares more about besides her own father. But Molly has a secret she shares with Roger and his brother Osborne that would devastate their father if he knew, but one he would have to know and sooner rather than later. Although most of the novel is resolved we don't know the end fate of Roger and Molly because the author died before she could finish the novel. We are led to believe that was the direction was taking.

The novel is easy read and to follow the plot, but the pattern of their speech in that day may take some getting used to. Otherwise the events of the book keep the reader wanting to keep going, but the fact that the writer died before having finished the book leaves the reader wanting questions answered.



Quotes

For the first time in her life, Molly Gibson was to be included among the guests at the Towers. pg 9

He has not an ounce of superfluous flesh on his bones; and his leanness goes a great way to gentility. pg 38

"To be sure, a stepmother to a girl is a different thing to a second wife to a man!" pg 75

"She's at school in France, picking up airs and graces." pg 123

She was sent home in the carriage, loaded with true thanks from every one of the family. Osborne ransacked the houses for flowers for her; Roger had chosen her out books of every kind. The squire himself kept shaking her hand, without being able to speak his gratitude, till at last he had taken her in his arms, and kissed her as he would have done a daughter. pg 212

"Such a shabby thing for a duchess I never saw; not a bit of a diamond near her! They're none of'em worth looking at except the countess, and she's always a personable woman, and not so lusty as she was. But they're not worth waiting up for till this time o' night." pgs291-292

During all the months that had elapsed since Mrs. Hamley's death, Molly had wondered many a time about the secret she had so unwittingly become possessed of that last day in the Hall library. It seemed so utterly strange and unheard-of a thing to her inexperienced mind, that a man should be married, and yet not live with his wife-that a son should have entered into the holy state of matrimony without his father's knowledge, and without being recognized as the husband of some one known or unknown by all those with whom he came in daily contact, that she felt occasionally as if that little ten minutes of revelation must have been a vision in a dream. pg 318

Just then she heard nearer sounds; an opened door, steps on the lower flight of stairs. He could not have gone without even seeing her. He never, never would have done so cruel a thing- never would have forgotten poor little Molly, however happy he might be. pg 371

"Madam your wife and I didn't hit it off the only time I ever saw her, I won't say she was silly, but I think one of us was silly, and it wasn't me." pg 390

"I wish I could give you a little of my own sensitiveness, for I have too much for my happiness." pg 425

Having anything to conceal was so unusual- almost so unprecedented a circumstance with her that it preyed upon her in every way. pg 482



" People may flatter themselves just as much by thinking that their faults are always present to other people's minds as if they believe that the world is always contemplating their individual charms and virtues." pg 534

"Sometimes one likes foolish people for their folly, better than wise people for their wisdom." pg 582

"My dear, if you must have the last word, don't let it be truism." pg 634



Topics for Discussion

What event led Mr. Gibson to change his mind and allow Molly to stay with Mrs. Hamley? And how did it lead to his eventually marrying Mrs. Kirkpatrick?

Why did the Squire not want Molly to meet either of his two sons?

Why were the Miss Brownings upset that Molly was staying on with Mrs. Hamley instead of them, and how did Mr. Gibson smooth it over with them?

Why did Osborne Hamley feel he had to keep his secret from everyone especially his father?

Why was Molly so upset by the news that her father was going to be married again?

Why did Cynthia want to keep her promise of an engagement to Roger Hamley a secret?

How did Molly help Cynthia with the situation she found herself in with Mr. Preston? And what effect did it have on her on life?

In what ways did Lady Harriet help Molly with the Mr. Preston situation?

How did Molly help the Hamley family when Osborne died?

What changed Roger's mind about Molly? To change him thinking of her as a sister and more of a lover?