



Because Of The Lockwoods

Dorothy Whipple

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The story is deceptively simple: the entanglement of two families in a northern town called Aldworth. One, the Lockwoods, wealthy and powerful, in a position to patronise and help the second family, the poor Hunters, who have been left fatherless with a weak, ineffectual mother. Though the thudding heart of the story draws the reader inexorably along, hoping for the meek to conquer the strong, it is a surprising book in many ways, not least for its subversive portrayal of family – the children are often the adults, the parents the untrustworthy, unwise ones, and Whipple makes it clear that what we call today the nuclear family is not the answer to happiness. But what may be most satisfying about the book is how the climax is reached as a result of character. This is twentieth-century British fiction at its very best.

Because Of The Lockwoods Details

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From Reader Review Because Of The Lockwoods for online ebook

Beth Bonini says

"You have a wonderful power of taking quite ordinary people in quite unromantic surroundings, in their normal ways of life and making them live and press themselves on your readers' minds in a way that really grips." This quotation is attributed to Sir John Murray, who wrote it to author Dorothy Whipple when congratulating her on her novel *They Were Sisters*. Author Harriet Evans includes it in her Preface to this book, and I refer to it because I think it sums up Whipple's writing so perfectly. All of her novels are immensely satisfying to read and I think it is mostly because of that ability to make her characters - and their triumphs and tragedies - so real and relatable.

The novel begins with two families: the Hunters and the Lockwoods. They are neighbours in the northern industrial town of Aldworth, where Mr. Hunter is an architect and Mr. Lockwood is a lawyer and businessman. The families are of equal social status, although the Hunters have the edge when it comes to breeding; but when Mr. Hunter dies unexpectedly, he leaves his gentle wife and their three small children in a financially precarious position. Mr. Lockwood takes advantage of Mrs. Hunter's grief and incompetence in handling her own affairs, and then for the next twenty years the family are locked into an uneasy relationship of dependence/resentment on one side, and patronage/disdain on the other.

The protagonist of the novel is Thea Hunter, the youngest of the three Hunter children. Intelligent, sensitive and observant, Thea suffers the most from her family's poverty and social diminishment. She is painfully aware of the Lockwoods' poor treatment of her family. I hesitate to give away any more of the plot, because there is such great pleasure in how the events unfold. Harriet Evans also describes Whipple as an 'intensely moral' writer, and this is one of the qualities I truly love about her novels. Whipple is absolutely the mistress of the telling detail, and her characters are always both consistent and nuanced. She doesn't write stock villains or perfect ingenue heroines, and I think that is why her novels still seem so real and alive - nearly 100 years after the time period in which they were set. My only regret in the novel is that Whipple does not tie up all of the emotional loose ends - instead choosing to end the novel on a rather dramatic climax. She hints at what will happen to the characters I became so attached to, but I wish that she would have written at least another 100 pages!

Margaret says

Dorothy Whipple is so insanely readable. I'm glad Persephone have republished so many of her books, as I don't think I'd have found her otherwise. This is the latest one they've done, and I think it will end up being a favorite.

The story has to do with a rich family defrauding and patronizing a newly poor one, and as usual, the characters are beautifully drawn. Even the nastier characters have moments where one can't help but sympathize with them, and the sympathetic characters have their own flaws. I really liked the intelligent, headstrong heroine, Thea, and I loved Oliver, the eventual hero. I must admit to not finding the ending completely convincing, or this would have been a five-star book for me.

Rosemary says

Two professional men, the lawyer Mr Lockwood and the architect Mr Hunter, are neighbours with young families in big houses on the edge of an industrial town. But Mr Hunter dies, and his family are left poorly off, reliant on Mr Lockwood for financial advice and Mrs Lockwood's patronage for their social standing. The resentment this causes, especially in young Thea Hunter, will affect all of their lives.

This is a typical Dorothy Whipple and I did enjoy it, although perhaps not as much as some of hers, because I didn't find any of the characters particularly sympathetic. But it was still a great study of life in a certain place at a certain time.

The introduction suggests that one of the reasons Dorothy Whipple isn't better known today is the terrible titles of her books. I certainly agree. This is one of the worst titles - so dreary. But don't let it put you off!

Hilary says

Another un-put-downable Dorothy Whipple.

The respectable Lockwoods look down on the Hunters, a widow and her three children. Mr Lockwood looks after Mrs Hunters affairs, but Thea suspects corruption. The way the Lockwards looked down upon the Hunters and the Hunters (or at least to begin with) looked down upon Oliver was reminiscent of the Two Ronnies sketch !

Wonderful characters. So enjoyed reading about Thea, I loved the way she refused to be looked down upon, Oliver's hard work and tenacity was admirable.

The ending could have been better, I felt there were many story lines left unfinished, enough to warrant a sequel.

Literary Relish says

This human story of the almost overwhelmingly 'ordinary' injustices in life and how people strive to overcome such obstacles struck me more than I expected. Thea, our unwitting heroine, is very much a 'real' woman, so very flawed in her jealousies, passions, fatalism and untimely outbursts; a character to be frustrated by but who is all the more charming for her imperfections. The injustice of the unattractive, devious Lockwoods publicly lording it over a family less fortunate and, in the case of Mrs Hunter, far weaker than themselves, was almost too much to bear at times, making it all the easier to fly through this wonderful novel to its dramatic conclusion.

Choosing a bit of Whipple for my first Persephone read turned out to be a wise move. Not only is she their most published author (i.e. a safe bet) but her masterful management of her characters and cosy, gently progressing narrative made this an easy one to sink into. Thea's flight to France gives us a welcome change of mood and scenery and allows, in her absence, peripheral characters such as neighbour and admirer Oliver Reade to transform himself from grade-a sleazeball to working-class hero. Mrs Hunter, on the other hand, I would have been quite glad to slap at times and I did find this novel, overall, difficult to place in time, something my hungry mind can't help but find frustrating.

Perhaps the compelling characters drew me in, maybe it was the pleasing humdrum nature of the Hunters' lives, or perhaps Whipple's Northern setting spoke to my Mancunian soul. Whatever it was, I loved it,

devouring this novel slowly in several sittings. More Whipple to warm me up please!

<http://relishreads.com/2015/11/12/bec...>

Pam Dane says

I love Dorothy Whipple! I'm sorry all of her books aren't available! Her writing is so enveloping that you can't stop reading!

Clare Harvey says

Because of the Lockwoods

Dorothy Whipple's penultimate novel, *Because of the Lockwoods*, was first published by John Murray in 1949, and republished by Persephone Books in 2014.

Because of the Lockwoods begins: 'Mrs Lockwood decided to invite Mrs Hunter and her children to Oakfield for New Year's Eve. It would be one way of getting the food eaten up...and by whom better than the Hunters, who certainly never saw such things elsewhere, since Oakfield was the only house of its kind they went to nowadays?'

It is a deceptively bland start. Whipple is not the kind of author to start a story with a gimmicky first paragraph, but this understated spark of an opener turned into a slow burn, that soon had me eager to read on. Right from the outset it's clear that there's a symbiotic relationship between the Hunters and the Lockwoods. The Lockwoods need to patronise the Hunters to make them feel good about themselves, and the Hunters think they need the Lockwoods' patronage to ensure their social status.

The two families had been neighbours in one of the best neighbourhoods in a Northern ex-Mill town. But when Mr Hunter dies, his lawyer and neighbour, Mr Lockwood, takes advantage of his widow's naivety to commit a minor act of fraud against her dead husband's estate. This sets in turn events that bind the two families into one dysfunctional mass, affecting the Hunter and Lockwood children until they reach adulthood, and beyond.

In *Because of the Lockwoods* I can quite see why Dorothy Whipple was compared to Austen. The snobbery and petty hierarchies of early twentieth century provincial life are keenly and wittily observed. And in Thea Hunter, we have a shrewd, but flawed, protagonist to carry us through the story (not dissimilar to Lizzie Bennet).

Thea is the youngest, and most intelligent, of the Hunter children. Through her eyes we see the arrogance of Mr Lockwood, and the spoilt smugness of his family. We see the Lockwoods treating their erstwhile neighbours as a charity case, and we feel Thea's burning resentment at this. We see how Thea's mother and siblings are resigned to the Lockwood's patronage, and feel Thea's frustration at her family's compliance in their victimhood.

The British Class system has always provided fertile ground for fiction. Like Austen, Whipple turns her attention to the jostling paranoia and acute awareness of social place within the middle classes. In *Because of the Lockwoods* The Hunters are coming down in the world. They no longer have the money to go to the 'right' schools, social events, wear the 'right' clothes, or even have the 'right' kinds of careers. But because of their close association with the Lockwoods, who are on their way up, they are unable to forget their own loss of status: the richer, better-connected Lockwoods ensure the Hunters are continually, painfully reminded of the life they once enjoyed themselves, and is now lost to them (ironically through Mr Lockwood's dodgy probate dealings). And nobody feels the hurt more than intelligent, beautiful, Thea, who retains a sense of injustice that propels the plot throughout.

Rather than seeing the entire story through a middle-class prism, Whipple also gives us the other ends of the

class spectrum: we meet Angela, daughter of Sir and Lady Harvey, who doesn't seem to care a jot about anyone's wealth or background, and ultimately turns her back on it all. We also meet Oliver Reade, Thea's neighbour in Byron Street (the less salubrious part of town the Hunter family had to move to after Mr Hunter died). Oliver is an ex-barrow boy, whose business nous means he's moving up in the world, becoming rich and influential, despite his lack of education or expensively acquired manners. Seeing other characters ignoring the class system, and making a success of themselves in spite of it, gives added poignancy to the distress the Hunters suffer at losing their place in society.

Throughout the novel it feels as if Whipple is quietly shouting between the lines: 'Who cares what the Lockwoods think? Who cares what anyone thinks? Who cares what class you are? Find your own happiness, and make your own future.' Eventually Whipple allows her protagonist, Thea Hunter, to finally shake off the shackles of class-consciousness, as well as her dysfunctional link to the Lockwoods. However, the happy ending isn't handed out on a plate. Whipple puts Thea in position where a wonderful future is within reach, but leaves the fairy-tale ending to the reader's imagination.

I have no idea how I would try to sell *Because of the Lockwoods* as an idea to a publisher today – what would the 'elevator pitch' be? It is just a story about two unremarkable families in an unremarkable English town during an unremarkable time in history. There are no wars raging in the background, no murders, rapes, ghosts, illegitimate children, or improbable twists. It doesn't have an opening paragraph that plunges me into the action, or chapter endings that leave me hanging. It begins domestically and unobtrusively with a middle-aged, middle-class woman in middle-England. It should not be a page-turner, and yet it is. *Because of the Lockwoods* folded me up in its arms and wouldn't let me go, and I put this down to Whipple's skills as a storyteller. She creates believable, flawed, nuanced characters, and lets them draw you through a perfectly paced plot to a deeply satisfying conclusion.

In short - *Because of the Lockwoods*: a beautifully observed coming-of-age story about class, overcoming victimhood, and self-determination.

Julie says

4 1/2 Another recommendation from the booksnob blog. I think I have now read all the Dorothy Whipple I can get my hands on. If only I could fly to London and visit the Persephone Press bookstore. I love these books. The subject matter may seem light at first glance, but what Whipple does is tell how it really was to live as a woman between the wars in England and the constraints that are placed on them. Charming, well written. I wish there were more.

Mij Woodward says

I LOVED this book!

It felt deliciously wicked. All about envy and greed, snobbery and put-downs. There were characters whom the reader is meant to love-to-hate, and I relished the chance. The subtle mockery at times had me grinning.

I also loved the way Dorothy Whipple had such a grip on human motivations and feelings.

An extra bonus was getting a used copy of this book from Amazon which was published specially for the People's Book Club in Chicago, and discovering the artwork on the inside covers, showing women in their dresses much like what my mother used to wear in the '40's (and therefore, the 50's since she never threw

anything away) . . .

Katie says

My family kept telling me to read Dorothy Whipple's books and I'm so glad I listened! I could not put this book down. So beautifully written!!

Mary says

Love Dorothy Whipple.
This book was aptly named.
All because of the Lockwoods who are a well to do family.
The Hunters find hard times after Mr Hunter died.
Mrs Hunter relied on Mr Lockwood to sort her papers for her.
What happens to the Hunter children who have to do what the Lockwoods say?
A lovely story about the class divide through circumstance and how secret's are found out.
Well crafted characters who you really feel for.
A lovely story.

Jane says

Of all of the authors I thought about when I was compiling my Birthday Book of Underappreciated Lady Authors, I think that Dorothy Whipple is the one whose long neglect is most inexplicable and the one I would be most confident in putting in the hands of a devoted reader who doesn't know how wonderful books from the recent past can be.

She wrote such absorbing and compelling novels, filled with beautiful writing, with characters who live and breathe and happenings that ring so very true. Her books are so alive that it impossible to put one down without spending a great deal of time thinking about what had happened and what might be happening in the world that she brought to life after her story ended.

In this book, she tells the story of the Hunters and the Lockwoods, who are neighbours in a Northern mill town. They had been peers, with children of similar ages, but that changed after the sudden death of Richard Hunter. His practice as an architect had suffered during the war, he had hoped that business would improve when peace came, but he didn't live long enough to find out; and so Mrs Hunter and her three children must adapt to much humbler circumstances, and the relationship between the two families must change.

The situation would always be difficult and it was exacerbated by the characters of the two women, who were friends but not close enough to be anything other than Mrs Lockwood and Mrs Hunter to each other; the former inclined to be grand and gracious and the latter inclined to be accepting and appreciative ...

Mrs Lockwood asked her husband, a solicitor, to help Mrs Hunter to deal with her late husband's papers. He was reluctant to get involved, and utterly graceless, but after relying on her husband to deal with everything and having no idea what to do, Mrs Hunter was so grateful for his advice, and accepted it all without a

moment's hesitation.

She didn't know that Mr Lockwood had taken advantage of her ignorance, and let her believe that her husband repaid a loan that he had granted after seeing that his receipt was missing. The way he suggested he should recoup the loan cost her a great deal, and his advice, which was inadequate but authoritative, would cost her a great deal more over the years.

Mrs Lockwood continued her to visit Mrs Hunter, even after she moved to a less desirable part of town. She enjoyed having someone who was always ready to listen to stories of her family and what they had been doing, who she could make presents of clothing that she had been seen in enough times, and somebody who would always be grateful for an invitation. Mrs Lockwood thought that she was being kind, and Mrs Hunter was grateful.

Thea, the youngest of Mrs Hunter's three children, came to bitterly resent the family that she saw was patronising hers, the family that had so many things she would have loved and took them for granted.

Her feelings grew stronger when Mr Lockwood arranged for her older siblings, Martin and Molly, to leave school at the earliest opportunity and take uncongenial jobs because he didn't want the trouble of helping to find a way for them to follow the career paths that they wanted. She wanted to make sure that the same thing wouldn't happen to her, but she didn't know how.

When Thea found out that the Lockwood girls were going to school in France for a year she was desperate to find a way to go to. It seemed impossible, but a teacher who saw that she had a great deal of potential found a way for her to go to the same school and work for her keep. The Lockwoods were horrified that she didn't know her place, that she should think that she could have the same advantages as their daughters; but she took to the new school and life in France in a way that they never would.

Thea's sojourn in France ended in tears, but an unexpected find in the lining of her father's old bag and the generosity of spirit of a new neighbour would be a catalyst for change for the Hunters and that Lockwoods ...

I felt so much as I read about them.

I was angry at the Lockwoods completely unjustified sense of superiority, but at the same time I could see that they were oblivious and that they really did think that they were doing the right thing.

I was moved when Mrs Hunter was shattered by the loss of her husband and unable to face the future, but there were times when I thought that she really could have, should have, done a little more to help herself and her children.

Thea was a joy to read about. I loved her spirit and her ambition for herself and her family. I worried when she made mistakes, when she wouldn't listen to anyone, but I appreciated that her heart was in the right place and that she would learn.

I appreciated the intelligence of the writing, the very real complexity of the characters and the relationships, and the wonderful emotional understanding of everything she wrote about that Dorothy Whipple had.

There is so much more than I have written about, but I can only - I should only - say so much.

I loved what the author had to say.

She said that families who looked in on themselves - and both the Lockwoods and the Hunters were guilty of this - would not thrive and grow as families who looked out to the world could and would.

She spoke of social injustice and of how society was changing after the war.

And she wove this into her story quite beautifully, so that you could think about how cleverly she wrote or you could simply enjoy the drama, the romance, the suspense

Mr Lockwood's misdeeds hang over this story, until it comes to a dark and dramatic conclusion.

I loved all of the book but I think I loved the final act most of all, because it was so profound and so emotional.

The ending was sudden, I was left wondering what happened next. I would have loved to have been told, but I think I know, and sometimes it is nice to be able to speculate ...

Katherine says

I'd never heard of Dorothy Whipple until a few months ago and it was only through the praises of another reader on Goodreads she came to my attention. After reading this, I—like many other readers—am astounded her books are not more well-known and saddened they aren't very accessible. (My local library system does not have a single one of her books but fortunately I was able to get a copy through interlibrary loan.)

When I read the description of the plot it seemed rather humdrum and ordinary, and despite some glowing reviews I was completely unprepared for how exceptional this book is. *Because of the Lockwoods* is written with such remarkable straightforward simplicity and eloquence, such clarity of complex human emotion that I found it difficult to put down. So while this may have been my first encounter with Whipple's writing it most certainly will not be the last. A new favorite.

Highly recommended.

Anna says

I think I've read nearly all of Whipple at this point--except for her short stories which are on my list. What interests me is how she constructs a story--perhaps most notably in *Greenbanks* and maybe less so in a book like *Someone at a Distance* (though I think it's still true)--she's not so interested in plot but in character. And that is what drives the book forward. So, her books feel organic and sometimes spontaneous and rich in thinking about "humanness." There are themes that reappear, and as a group, make up a complete body of thought or preoccupations that inform one another and feel necessary to one another. She'll take a position in one book and explore its opposite track in another. There is some brilliance to this. Some real willingness to follow a thing in every direction (not a single one).

I love these books. When I am reading one, I feel I am entirely inside the story. And I trust Whipple, wherever she goes.

Sasha Drennan says

Words cannot describe how much I loved this book - I want to read everything she ever wrote!
A simple yet clever plot, incredibly realistic and consistent characterisation, beautifully written prose style and a completely satisfying ending. Everything I could possibly want in a book...
