



## The Blue Flower

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Set in late eighteenth century Germany, *THE BLUE FLOWER* tells the story of Friederich von Hardenberg, a poet whose passion and mysticism envelope him and his pursuit of Sophie von Kuhn, an adolescent whom he idealizes as his “heart’s desire” and his “spirit’s guide.” As he relentlessly pursues Sophie, he moves between the worlds of a small town in Germany, in which he grew up, and the great university cities of Leipzig, Jena, and Wittenberg. He also encounters some of the German geniuses during his travels: the philosopher Johann Fichte, the poet and historian Friedrich von Schiller, the theoretician of Romanticism, Friedrich von Schlegel, and the genius of the period, Johann Goethe.

With an historian’s eye toward accurate detail—from the description of German culinary habits and medicine to the inclusion of some of Novalis’s letters, poems, and other works—Fitzgerald develops a narrative that reveals both historical Germany at the end of the eighteenth century and the complexity of the character of Fritz von Hardenberg. This passionate poet is committed to the Romantic search for beauty, embodied in his beloved Sophie. Believing that the search is more important than the discovery and that becoming is more critical than being, Fritz is undeterred in his quest to marry Sophie. Her death at the conclusion of the novel does not terminate his search; it merely leaves him—and the readers—with the question posed in a chapter title: “What Is the Meaning?” What is the meaning of Sophie? What is the meaning of the blue flower, an image in a story Fritz is writing? For the romantic, the question is more important than the answer, and this provocative novel effectively asks—and leaves unanswered—multiple questions.

## Sources for Further Study

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