



Old Mortality

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Characters Discussed

Miranda, a Southern girl, eight years old at the book's beginning, who cannot understand until she grows up that adults were once young, too. She is puzzled as to why grown-ups cling to the relics of the past. She and her sister are educated in a convent in New Orleans. When she grows up, she marries without her father's consent. As an adult, she finally realizes she has no part in the past and must find her own legends.

Maria, Miranda's older sister, twelve years old at the beginning of the book, who has the same inability to understand adults and their lives as her sister.

Grandmother, the children's grandmother, a woman who twice a year spends a day in her attic weeping over the relics of her family's past.

Amy, the children's father's sister, reputed to have been the most beautiful girl in the South, as well as the best rider, the best dancer, and quite a flirt. A spoiled darling, she dies mysteriously six weeks after marrying Gabriel.

Harry, Miranda and Maria's father, who hopes, dubiously, that his chubby, freckle-faced little girls will become as beautiful as his sister Amy. He fought a duel over his sister and spent a year in Mexico as a fugitive.

Great-aunt Keziah, one of the girls' relatives, a fat and ugly woman. She is living proof that all the women in the family are not slim, beautiful creatures like Aunt Amy.

Eva Parrington, an ugly, chinless cousin of the little girls. She teaches Latin and works for woman suffrage, going to jail three times for that cause. On the way to her Cousin Gabriel's funeral, with the grown-up Miranda, she says that the myth about Cousin Amy is false, that Amy was a selfish girl who very likely committed suicide after tormenting her new husband throughout their honeymoon. Cousin Eva looks back bitterly on her youth as a kind of sex market in which she was unwanted merchandise.

Gabriel, Amy's second cousin, whom she kept dangling for five years as a suitor. She agrees to marry him, ironically, after he is cut off from his inheritance. After her death, he becomes a drunkard and spends his time hanging around the race track.

Miss Honey, Gabriel's second wife. She is a bitter, slatternly woman who hates her husband's family.

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