



Charity Girl

Georgette Heyer

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When Fate and a chivalrous impulse combine to saddle Viscount Desford with a friendless homeless waif named Cherry Steane, to whom else should he turn in such a scrape but his old childhood playmate, Henrietta Silverdale? For all they refused to oblige their parents by marrying, they have always been the best of friends. But as Desford pursues Cherry's lickpenny grandfather and reprobate father around unfashionable watering places and the seedier fringes of society, Hetta is forced to wonder whether he might not, at last, have fallen in love. Without the timely intervention of his scapegrace brother Simon, and Hetta's worthy suitor Gary Nethercott, Desford is in danger of making a rare mess of his affairs.

Charity Girl is a wonderful romantic novel by the queen of the Regency romance, one of the most popular historical novelists of all time.

Charity Girl Details

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From Reader Review Charity Girl for online ebook

Michelle says

Apparently I have this little problem when it comes to choosing books from a genre. I find myself choosing the one book that is *not* representative of the group. Like that time I picked up an Orson Scott Card novel with the intention of giving science fiction a try. I've NEVER read science fiction, and guess what? I still haven't ever read science fiction because I just happened to choose the *one* Orson Scott Card book that is NOT science fiction.

And I've done it again! My mother is a huge fan of Regency Romances, so I was looking through her shelf of old books, and found *Charity Girl*. I figured, since it is Georgette Heyer and Georgette Heyer *is* the queen of the Regencies, this would be the perfect book. (BTW...I have read one contemporary Regency recently, *Seeking Persephone*, which I did sort of adore. But I wanted an "original" example of the genre, I guess...and now I'm rambling, so moving on.)

The problem is, I didn't pick the prototypical Regency. I picked the one wherein Miss Heyer seemed to be experimenting...maybe? I don't know. But it didn't have the sweet and lovely heroine versus the mean and brooding hero. You know how the story goes down. These two folks are completely incompatible with each other, but for some reason, they are thrust together due to some impossible circumstance. A marriage of convenience takes place early on, and then we wait and see how the two work their differences out. In the mean time, there is a lot of romantic tension because they both like each other and have lots of chemistry, but they are afraid or can't get over their pride, and so you get a glance here or a touch there, and maybe one or two small kisses. But just as in real life, you like the anticipation of the budding romance.

None of that happened here. It wasn't a bad thing, I suppose, and I liked it enough to finish it, but I was hoping for the formula. So maybe two stars is more how I feel about the fact that it was not the book I was expecting, but I gave it three because I honestly did like it. But it really stops at like for me.

But then again, the story *did* ramble on a bit. Here is a run down of the basic plot: girl runs away from her adopted home; girl is found by a wealthy aristocratic gentleman; gentleman must not break propriety by being seen to have seduced said girl; *BUT* gentleman cannot leave said girl by the wayside without assistance; gentleman takes girl to friend and goes in search of girl's grandfather and/or other possible friends to aid in girl's rescue.

And really, the part about searching and searching for the grandfather/friends went on for quite some time, and I was a bit bored with it. There was no real romantic tension between any of the characters. Unlike *Seeking Persephone*, I didn't find myself screaming inside at the characters to just kiss already. And then (spoiler alert...kind of but not really) the romance wasn't even between this girl and her gentleman rescuer. Ugh. Isn't that all part of the convention? Not here, I guess, because gentleman loves the woman with whom he is completely and totally compatible. That's all fine and well in real life, where people should marry those with whom they are compatible, of course, but this isn't real life, now is it? But then I didn't want him to be with the rescued heroine, either, because Heyer didn't build any romantic tension between those two characters, either.

Do you see what I am saying here??? Stick with the formula, I beg of you!!!

Oh and then the ending, well, wow, it just sped right up and all of a sudden the pickle that these characters

are in got actually sort of fun and exciting, and so I would say that the last forty pages or so were a bit redemptive of the drag that was going on there in the middle of the story.

Summary...this isn't a glowing review, but it wasn't a bad book. Just didn't find what I was expecting/wanted.

Sherwood Smith says

This a late novel, featuring one of Heyer's plain but kind heroines who has long been in love with the hero, as a younger woman comes along. It reads to me like it was phoned in.

Really only for completists, or for the Heyer fan who loves everything she did, without reserve.

Jamie Collins says

Not one of Heyer's best, but an enjoyable read. This one is mostly a comedy of manners, and while it's never laugh-out-loud funny, I read it with a smile on my face.

The romance is quite weak, although I was glad that the story didn't go in the direction I first expected. These are not modern romances so you must be prepared to enjoy the spectacle of wealthy gentlemen coming to the rescue of hapless females, but Heyer usually comes through with a balanced match.

The prose does bog down a little when Charity's father shows up. There are rather too many obnoxious speeches from him and too many indignant explanations on the part of the hero's friends. The book is also jam-packed with the typical Regency slang, enough to be annoying if you were to read two or three of these books in a row. I'm familiar with most of the slang by now, but there are still a few mysterious expressions.

Miranda Davis says

Like Sprigged Muslin, which has GH's wit and carefully crafted characters but little romance, this story involved the hero, a viscount and heir to a title, becoming entangled with a secondary character, the charity girl of the title, who is not his love interest. He spends much of his time apart from the one with whom he belongs in his effort to help the young girl who was cursed with a louse of a father who's absconded to the continent years ago and is presumed dead. He feels honor bound to help her escape being a drudge for no pay in her tightwad, disapproving aunt's house to a suitable situation. In doing this, he is embroiled in the circumstances, relies on his dear friend next door, but spends most of his time away from her.

It's a well-crafted story but, like Sprigged Muslin, isn't much of a romance. It's more a comedy of errors, with intrigues, lost relatives returning to raise a ruckus over Cherry (Charity), and the viscount finally realizing that he loves his neighbor and loyal friend after a lot of roundaboutations.

I listened to the audiobook of this simply because Daniel Philpott read it, he of the extraordinarily wonderful reading of The Unknown Ajax. He does an admirable job here, too, though there are fewer opportunities to bring diverse characters to life as in TUA. Sadly, it was the story itself that fell flat for me. At least with Sprigged Muslin, the secondary character is very funny while stealing the show. Here, Charity is always on

the verge of tears and a semi-ninny.

Kate says

In more weird mid-century marketing news (did they think women only read books about women, or could Heyer not come up with a cute double meaning title?), the real protagonist of *Charity Girl* is not the C.G. Cherry, who clearly annoyed Ms. Heyer before she'd been writing about her for thirty seconds, but instead the sensible but not un-dashing Viscount Desford.

Large quantities of silly Regency slang ("Turkish treatment" "mifty" and more!) make this a fun read, even though the conclusion is apparent half-a-page in. Heyer may be uneven, but there's no one else to match her style. I wish she came in a format to appeal to middle-schoolers because the friendliness of these love stories is so nice, non-threatening and bizarrely more realistic than most current teeny love fare.

? Irena ? says

1.5

I'll just leave this as an explanation for myself. I cannot believe the same person wrote *The Grand Sophy* wrote *this*.

You never get the feeling of who should be together. One of the positive things in this story is the hero himself. He is rarely with the heroine since he is trying to solve Cherry's problem so that could be the reason. The rest of them are as annoying as they can get. I neither liked snobbish Henrietta, nor Cherry (one of the dumbest characters I've come across in fiction). Everyone else is either horrible and selfish or simply dumb. Except Desford.

I admit that the beginning of the story is pretty good and funny so there's that.

Tadiana ☆Night Owl? says

3.33 stars. *Charity Girl* is one of Georgette Heyer's later and lesser offerings, but I still found it a fairly amusing and engaging read. Even more than most of her other novels, this is really a comedy of errors/manners (a mix of both) much more than than a romance. What romance there is, is extremely perfunctory, taking up less than two pages. But the characters and witty dialogue were enough to see me through it in good humor.

Thirty year old Viscount Ashley Desford, after getting chewed out by his ailing father for not getting married to Henrietta (Hetta) Silverdale, the neighbor his father picked out for him years ago ("I love her, but only like a sister," is Desford's excuse) takes off to visit his aunt. She invites him to join her at a small, country ball being held at the home of her neighbors, the Bugle family. There Desford meets and flirts with the lovely eldest Bugle daughter, Lucasta. He also meets Charity (Cherry) Steane, the Bugle's sweet, destitute niece, who lives with them and is bullied and treated like a servant.

The next morning, as Desford is driving his carriage back to London, he meets Cherry trudging along the road. She's run away from the Bugles and is hoping that her grandfather, Lord Nettlecombe, will take her in,

even though he disowned her father many years ago. Cherry's mother is dead, and her father disappeared a year or so ago and is presumed dead as well. One thing leads to another, and soon Desford is entangled in a series of misadventures as he tries to help Cherry find a permanent place to stay. Luckily he's able to drop Cherry off at his good friend Hetta's home while he's off scouring the countryside for Steane relatives in an effort to help Cherry.

I avoided reading any spoilers for this book, so it was amusing to try to figure out which lady Desford is going to end up with. I had my suspicions but wasn't entirely sure until Heyer tipped her hand about halfway through the book with a few fairly blatant clues.

Desford is heroic and goes far beyond the call of duty; Hetta is intelligent and clear-eyed; Cherry is sweet and unselfish. There are some fairly funny scenes with various colorful relations of Cherry's. Unfortunately none of these characters is particularly memorable, though.

I wouldn't recommend that anyone except a Heyer completist really go out of their way to find and read *Charity Girl*. It's rather slow-paced, but I enjoyed it well enough, though it's not going on my "reread someday" list. Don't expect much from it and you might find it amusing.

LaFleurBleue says

A nice romance from Georgette Heyer, with what some might consider as rather nondescript characters and a rather bland plot. For sure, the plot is rather simple with few twists and turns. And the characters are not completely extraordinary or outrageous. But that's part of the charm of that specific book. A story and characters to which everyone can easily relate

I enjoyed the read which felt shorter than other of her books and didn't deserve more pages. There were a few times when I deeply smiled. Not the bundle of fun that some of her other romances are but not as bad as I was lead to believe by reading other reviews.

Anne says

Is this even a Heyer novel?!?! What *is* this??

Okay, alright, I know I'm being harsh. The quality is there. The gorgeous writing is there. The delightful slang, elegant turn of phrases and general Heyer-feels are there. BUT. Who on earth are those flat, boring, two-dimensional characters?!? What the heck is that plot? Where is all the fun? The humour, the sparkle, the wit???? After having read such masterpieces as *These Old Shades*, *Devil's Cub*, *Frederica*, *Cotillion*, *Friday's Child*, and basically every single other Heyer novel (except *The Corinthian*, of which I also wasn't a huge fan), *Charity Girl* feels like a fraud. We all know the greatness of which Heyer is capable, yet she wrote *this*?? If it had been my first ever Heyer novel I think I might have liked it. It's well-written in classical Heyer style and there is enough going on for a newbie to like, but to a seasoned Miss like myself it falls completely flat because we all know this is just **not** the author at her best. Mind you, if this is her worst it's better than most people's best, but still. Having being spoilt many times before, I just couldn't bring myself to like this on very much.

Sure, I *like* the characters. Miss Silverdale is nice, Viscount Desford is nice, Miss Steane is nice, Mr.

Carrington is nice, Lord Wroxton is not so nice, Mr. Steane isn't either, and Lady Bugle and her countless daughters are most definitely not nice. Yay. No one really had any personality, or if they did, we had met them before. They didn't stand out, didn't come alive like in the other Heyer books. They didn't become my friends like they usually do, I didn't cheer for anyone, and didn't care who Viscount Desford was going to end up with, because it seemed so unimportant.

The plot was very reminiscent of *The Foundling* and *Sprig Muslin*, but at least *The Foundling* was a wonderful journey of self-realization and *Sprig Muslin* was hilariously funny. *Charity Girl* just doesn't cut it. The story was slow, dragged on, and was even sometimes irritating. The romance was unconvincing in the extreme, and although I liked the conclusion, the whole thing had been so bleh that I didn't care much. Already, I have pretty much forgotten everything that happened in this book. And small wonder, because the "Charity girl" mentioned on the cover isn't that present in the story, the hero disappears for a good chunk near the end, and the heroine only puts in a few appearances too.

So I'm not even entirely too sure what this whole thing was about!

I can't say it was a "bad" book, because it isn't and I still had fun reading it aloud practicing my British accent, but if you're looking to get lost in Regency-land and swoon over a dashing hero and become best friends with the heroine, this one really isn't the book for that. A fluffy and slightly diverting read, but really there are more important Heyers out there that need your attention ;)

Buddy-read with Lori :)

Andrea says

Not one of the more successful Heyers, this starts out with the introduction of a billion characters we never meet again, and then involves a lot of travelling in hunt of people, a too-large late appearance of a Falstaff, and very little chance to see the main couple even in the same room. There's not even a powerful trigger for the change of heart, since the couple appear to see each other regularly, and aren't at any real emotional extremis during the story.

Reread notes: liked this more on this re-read, although my note above still stands. I like Hetta rather a lot - she's very capable - and her partner avoiding any hint of the rake, and instead getting along well with practically everyone and being rather nicer than most Heyer heroes.

One thing that really stands out in this book is the overuse of period expressions. Heyer uses them a lot in all her regencies, but this one felt like no character could say anything without ladening on some period colour.

Ana Rînceanu says

My 30th Georgette Heyer

When Viscount Ashley Desford finds Cherry Steane running away from a life of drudgery with her uncaring relatives, he is determined to escort her to her grandfather in London. But upon arriving to an empty house, Desford places the girl in the care of Henrietta Silverdale, his neighbour and childhood friend.

The book had a promising start. I liked both Desford and Henrietta, but the search for Cherry's grandfather and the appearance of her father were dull events. Cherry and Nethercott's relationship was hammed in so as to make for a perfectly wrapped up ending, but I needed more time with the main couple. Sigh!

Mela says

A fine, good Heyer's Regency novel. One of shorter. One of her last and I could have seen her professional pen here. One may say: Good job.

Yes, I have noticed many similarities with her other stories, e.g. 'The Foundling', but it didn't bother me because I found here **engaging characters** (Simon was like some splendid heroes from her other romances, Lady and Lord Wroxton had an interesting own story I am sure) and so **beloved Heyer's language/dialogues**.

In my opinion, **this book had also something important to tell**. Reading it I was thinking about '**charity girls**'. All those girls/women of those times. Girls which hadn't the meaning. As a rule, women had less possibilities than today, but 'charity girls' had even less. I suspect, that many of them would have had better (happier) life if they had lowered their status (getting married with a farmer or a clerk or even working some lighter physical work). But **they were slaves of their class**.

So, because **it was good written (with a deeper level), pure Heyer and I have a nice time** - I am giving it 4 stars.

But I have to admit it hadn't a spark. This spark which made some of Heyer's stories simply marvelous, genial. For example: an adventure in The Foundling, Dominic in Devil's Cub, banter in Faro's Daughter, Sophy in The Grand Sophy. This sparkle, which makes that I want to read it again, even before I finish the book.

Nikki says

Charity Girl definitely isn't the best Heyer novel I've read. It's rather along the lines of Sprig Muslin, just with slightly different detail. That rather reduces its charms for me, having already read Sprig Muslin, and given that the heroines are either not particularly engaging, or we don't see enough of them.

I think I'd have enjoyed it more if I hadn't already read Sprig Muslin, but it's a mild one really by Heyer's standards. There're some amusing characters, but nothing laugh-out-loud, and there's not really any excitement either. I wouldn't read it for a first Heyer novel, definitely (go for The Talisman Ring, which I adore!), or even if you're only a casual fan.

It's well-written, of course, else I'd give it only two stars. I can't bear to do that with something by Heyer, though.

Kelly says

Wow. The first Heyer I genuinely, completely disliked. The plot has been done much better before. By Heyer. Many times. There were no hijinx. Just an annoying search for equally annoying, selfish, awful people who weren't even amusing to hear about. The characters were barely people, and when they were, they were terrible or irritating, with the possible exception of the hero, and that's only because he's off-stage or being perfect the whole book. I didn't want to spend time with any of these people. The heroine is a priggish, narrow-minded snob, as is everyone else in the book. It's incredibly classist for a book about "Charity," and the characters spend most of their conversation talking about which family is better than that family, selfish feuds from twenty years ago, and "bad blood." I have no idea why the hero would care for the heroine. It's never really explained to us, and it's certainly not shown, which makes the happy ending somewhat out of left field. The stock supporting characters, who are usually the comic relief... were not at all funny. In the least. The pairings were contrived, the plot progression a yawn, and I have no idea how she filled 300 pages with the vicious nothingness that was this book.

All in all, I've probably read 20-something Heyers. I suppose it's a good average that it took me this long for me to really dislike one of her books.

Jannah (Cloud Child) says

Read this a few years ago, it was hard to get through from what I remember. The romance was a bit confusing and the jargon too. I think it was funny though. Seeing reviews for Heyers other books, I see this wasn't her best so I'll have to give her a chance.

Carol ?? says

After rereading *The Foundling* & *Cousin Kate* & having an improved opinion of both, I did hope my assessment of *Charity Girl* would improve. I didn't expect to *like* this novel, mind, but hoped to find it an average read. Wrong. *Charity Girl* is still terrible & owes a lot to *The Foundling* & *Sprig Muslim* - both far better books. Reading Koestler's biography it sounds like GH wasn't well when she wrote this & genuinely thought she had written a good book. To be honest I had hoped on her usual diet of dexdrine, gin & cigarettes, she had phoned this one in. That at least would have been an excuse!

Not much actually happens in this book, the hero & heroine spend very little time together & the ending feels rushed. & I have read enough times in GH's works about inn servants not being allowed to handle a hero's boots, in case they put a thumb mark on them! I did like some of the minor characters (most notably Simon) & (view spoiler)

Now to proofreading criticisms of this particular publication. (Arrow) Page 164, Peccavi is not in italics, but it is in my old Pan copy. The italics make it clear it's a foreign word. When I first read it I thought it was a typo. Worse, they talk about a bumblebroth in the book, but it's called a humblebroth on the back cover. Very sloppy.

The other GH regency I didn't think much of was *Lady of Quality*. I may put off that reread for a while.

kris says

Ashley Carrington, Viscount Desford, stumbles across Miss Charity "Cherry" Steane on his way back to London. After discovering that Cherry's grandpa is not at home, he takes her to his long-time bff, Henrietta "Hetta" Silverdale. Cue some cross-country adventures, the blackmailing con man father, and a pinch of romance!

1. This was tolerable but not my particular cup of tea. It's very much *Sprig Muslin* but without the idyll in the countryside. Everyone is more isolated and it feels a bit more of a character study.
2. Cherry's papa was so goddamned slimy that I skimmed his chapters because UGH. SO GROSS.
3. The major romance was underbaked. Raw in the middle. Completely doughy.

Lori says

I enjoyed reading *Charity Girl* very much but this is the first Heyer book I have read that slogged through the middle before bringing me to a delightful conclusion. I am a true fan of Georgette Heyer's clean romances and even though this is not her best offering, I still crossed the finish line with a smile!

More a comedy of manners than a romance, *Charity Girl* has a buffet of regency slang terms that kept me in good humor throughout the entire narrative. That said, many things crossed my mind while I was reading this book. One of them was that the hero is almost too nice and too absent for much of the book. No, really, he's a great guy and that's a good thing. It's just that in other Heyer romances, the reformed rakes have been much more entertaining. Maybe it's just more satisfying to read about a hero that is willing to mend his ways for the sake of love?

The bottom line is, many readers will be tempted to set this book aside when they get toward the middle and they are nodding off due to the leisurely pace and the characters seem to be going around in circles. Do not be fooled by this! Heyer is shamming you! The ending is not to be missed and by the way, everyone gets what they want in the end! I would recommend this book to anyone who is in the mood to read a regency romp. Is that a thing? This is a very delightful regency romp!!! Someone stop me!!

Buddy read with my friend, Anne.

Andrea says

I must say, I am a bit disappointed. I pick out Georgette Heyer's books at random, trying to read them all. Some I LOVE (*Venetia*, *The Unknown Ajax*, *Arabella*), some I absolutely hate (*Sprig Muslin*, *Regency Buck*), and some are somewhere in the middle. Those don't feature characters I loathe and would love to slap some sense into, but they also don't make me care in the least about the characters' fates. This is one of these

books for me.

The story is almost exactly the same as that of Sprig Muslin (only with a much less despicable girl at the center of the story): pretty, but foolish girl, runs away from the family that took her in (in this case because she was treated as a charity case (hence the title "Charity Girl") and expected to be almost a servant to the girls), is found by slightly bored, but honorable and faultless aristocrat, who gets himself entangled in her mess –because, well, honestly, as was the case in Sprig Muslin, I have no idea why. Some misguided sense of honor, most likely- , who ends up realizing he has been in love with his best friend –who is always happy to be burdened with the runaway in question and take care of her while the hero sorts out the girl's mess- all along.

I thought Ashley, Viscount Desford, was slightly boring and uninteresting. He was so nice, so understanding, so perfect, it was sickening. Heyer has written the bored aristocrat who finds and helps a runaway so much better in my opinion (The Corinthian). Cherry was not particularly irritating, but very insipid and easy to be taken advantage of. I wished she would grow a backbone and stand up for herself, but that didn't happen. I also didn't care much for Henrietta, Desford's best friend, who just took in a total stranger, no questions asked, while the hero left to find someone willing to take her off her hands. The love story between Deford and Henrietta also fell much to short, to the point where it made very little sense to me that in the end both proclaimed they had loved each other all along.

To make things worse, this book featured some of the worst names I have yet come across (and having read almost all of Heyers books by now, that is saying something): Lady Sophronia Emborough, Charity "Cherry" Steane, Hephzibah Cardle, and Lucasta, Oenone, Perenna, and Dianeme Bugle. Some of these made me wonder how you would pronounce them that I sometimes forgot to concentrate on what I was reading. It's a short, light read that I would only recommend to the most dedicated Heyer fans, because I feel that if you pick this up at random without having read some of her other, more brilliant books, you could get the impression all her books are like this, which is definitely not the case. The second star is purely for the quality of the writing and some funny scenes (which still lacked the sparkling humor found, for example, in The Talisman Ring).

May Grider says

The question has been raised in other reviews, "What is this book really about?" Because it doesn't seem to be about romance. I think it could be about "Sons and Brothers", or perhaps "lord Desmond grows up". The relationship between the H and his father and brother is quite lovely.

Charity's father Mr. Steane is a very good character, alarming and funny.

And there is a beautiful quote toward the beginning of the book about the H's father, who is afflicted by gout and very testy:

"I am concerned for you, Mama, far more than I am for him! I don't know how you are able to bear your life! I could not!"

'No, I don't suppose you could,' she responded, looking at him in tolerant amusement. 'You weren't acquainted with him when he was young, and naturally you were never in love with him. But I was, and I remember how gay, and handsome, and dashing he used to be, and how very happy we were. And we still love one another, Ashley."

Upon reading that quote, many many years ago, it became a goal of mine to have someone whose youth I could remember, and who would remember mine, when we were both old. I know that it is easy to go astray when relating fiction to an author's real life, but considering GH wrote this when she was older, and her

husband was older than she, it seems that it might be a bit autobiographical.

There are things that don't work in the book, particularly a long scene with H, Charity's grandfather and his new wife. GH has to tell us that it was supposed to be funny by having the H/h laugh about it later.

Unfortunately, it's not actually funny. And the quick resolve of the H/h relationship is not credible. It does seem that the book reached an appropriate length and was submitted for publication, and I understand the comments that this book should perhaps be only for GH completists. However, I guess I count in that group. I had to read it, and I still enjoy it.
