



Ishmael; Or, In the Depths

E.D.E.N. Southworth

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You will never read a story that is more inspiring and challenging than Ishmael. The heights of success achieved by this young man reveal little of the utter poverty into which he was born. He entered life motherless and poor, and despite the wishes of everyone around, he survived and flourished in his paltry environment. His commitment to character and integrity and his singular focus on preserving his mother's name gave his life focus and purpose. His perseverance and determination to educate himself in law gave him the opportunity to influence the highest levels of government. E.D.E.N. Southworth captures the rich panorama of sights and sounds in rural Maryland in the decades prior to the Civil War. When you reach the end, don't despair —the drama continues in the sequel, *Self Raised!*

Ishmael; Or, In the Depths Details

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From Reader Review Ishmael; Or, In the Depths for online ebook

Leah Good says

Conceived in an innocent but terrible mistake, Ishmael is left a friendless infant and a poverty stricken child. His honesty, his thirst for knowledge, and his determination to work hard sets him apart from other boys. He grows into an honorable young man with only one weakness--his love for the beautiful but haughty Claudia. Will her terrible marriage to a viscount ruin Ishmael? Or will an earthy angel rescue him?

One of my favorite Lamplighter Books. A must read classic.

R.A. Denny says

As a young girl, I discovered this book on my parent's bookshelf with my great-grandmother's signature in it. I was fascinated to think that my great-grandmother who raised my mother, and my grandmother, who died as a young woman, had both read this very book that I now held in my hands. I read it over and over again. The noble and compassionate nature of the young protagonist, Ishmael, was inspirational to me. Even the use of the outdated convention where the author speaks directly to the reader seemed charming, since it spoke to me of a bygone era. I loved this book so completely as a young girl that I can give it nothing less than a five!

LeeAnn says

I have been engulfed in this book this entire week and I'm just not ready to part from all the characters. My fiancé, on the other hand, is very much ready for me to leave the 1800s behind and rejoin him. The story took off at a slow pace, but if you commit to reading this in its entirety, you will be pleased that you did. Unlike reading novels based in the 1800s, this story was written then. I appreciated the authentic glance into that time period, even if that meant it offended my senses especially in regards to slavery. Having said that, this is a beautiful piece of work that offers readers a glimpse into the nature of new America. I have searched high and low for the true identity of Ishmael and have been unable to even make a guess. If you know who the noble countrymen's name, please share!

Hadley says

What a wonderful book and fabulous story! The characters, were lovable, varied, and intriguing... Ishmael especially. I love to find a really good - an almost-unfailingly so - kind of hero, that's not annoyingly good in some overblown manner. Ishmael is very much the soul of integrity in this book, but is a compelling and very likable protagonist. His rise from obscurity through relentless perseverance, hard work, and unflinching honesty is admirable and an exemplary pattern to follow. As for the story... it takes many twists and turns, and leaves you wondering by the end what in the world is going to happen to some of the characters in the sequel! The lives of many different characters are woven together, though often unknowingly, making you wonder how the web will ever become untangled and how the secrets and lives of characters will fare! Now I'm just eagerly awaiting Self Raised - the book's sequel, from my interlibrary loan order!!

Jason says

How is this not a more famous book? Or E.D.E.N Southworth not a more famous author? The book's hero too noble or the author's Christianity too apparent, perhaps? Nevertheless, this story is so fascinating and well-told and its hero's goodness and industry so affecting, that the book is very hard to put down once opened. Written and set in antebellum Maryland and Washington , D.C., it is easy to see why Ms. Southworth could have been considered the best storyteller of her time, or, if she was not, it is hard to understand why not. The story opens under happy circumstances and shortly thereafter events take unexpected and unfortunate turns, leaving the hero as poor and unloved as can be imagined. (The alternative title is, after all, "In the Depths.") From there, it is the story of a poor boy striving to make good despite many obstacles and temptations. It is an inspiring and fun read. But the story is not complete, so on to the sequel!

Elyse Kelly says

For the most part, Southworth wrote characters who were definitively good or bad and you could tell this because the good were perfect and the bad were...not. However, she did introduce a few characters who were not at all perfect. People were sinning and making mistakes and yet she had you feeling sympathy for them anyway. This was the first novel I read in which the protagonist had a serious flaw. Being used to reading about people who could do no wrong, my senses were a little shocked and baffled. But as I studied on it, I realized how much more relatable a character is if they are not god-like. As the book that introduced me to that concept, it has affected my writing, especially my character development, ever since I read it

Angie Thompson says

DNF - not necessarily bad, but too much tragedy for my taste

Robert Tessmer says

per·se·vere

–verb (used without object)

to persist in anything undertaken; maintain a purpose in spite of difficulty, obstacles, or discouragement; continue steadfastly.

Perseverance is probably one of the hardest qualities for a person to develop, and it yet it is also one of the most rewarding. With enough perseverance, greatness can be achieved, no matter what circumstances, obstacles or hardships stand in in the way. It is this quality that stands at the center of E. D. E. N. Southworth's 1876 novel Ishmael: or In the Depths.

Plot:

It is into the humblest of circumstances in pre-Civil War Maryland that our hero, Ishmael Worth, is born. Raised in poverty by his maiden aunt, Ishmael must take on many odd jobs to keep them from starving. But it isn't just food that Ishmael hungers for, but knowledge as well. Through his integrity, honesty and thirst for knowledge, Ishmael soon finds himself in one of Maryland's most exclusive private schools. He also finds himself in the company of some of the nation's most prominent families; the Middleton family, whose father runs the school, as well as Judge Merlin and his daughter Claudia. Ishmael soon begins to worship Claudia when she defends him against the school bullies, and while she returns his affection, it is more like the affection that one would have for a dog or a small child.

As the years pass, Ishmael grows into a fine and intelligent young man. His goal is to pass the bar exam without going to law school. Though Judge Merlin sees this as impossible, Ishmael does not and sets to work on his dream. But the cloud surrounding the circumstances of his birth begin to overshadow his successes, and the one thing that Ishmael so deeply desires, Claudia's hand in marriage, begins to slip further and further from his grasp.

My Review (Caution-Spoilers):

First off, I must tell you that I read the Lamplighter edition of this story, not the original. According to Lamplighter, there have been a few modifications to the story, such as the removal of unnecessary consumption of alcohol as well as unnecessary passion (hehe).

The other thing that you should probably know is that this is not, I repeat, NOT great literature. Most of the characters are pretty flat (Claudia is probably the only one with any variation) and the writing is not the best in the world. Also, virtue is always rewarded and vice never goes unpunished; circumstances which we know don't often happen here on the earth.

Having said that, I do think that this book is worth your time. The plot itself is riveting. Every time that I read it, I have a hard time putting it down, even though I know how it ends. There are also many lessons that can be learned from this story.

The importance of integrity. Many of Ishmael's opportunities come to him because of his honesty and integrity, and it shows that men will respect you if you have these qualities, no matter how humble your circumstances.

The importance of perseverance. There were many times when Ishmael's circumstances seemed overwhelming, and yet he never gave up. He fought on, not for his own glory and achievement, but for God's. "...but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:13b-14.

God's providence. Considering the tragic circumstances surrounding his birth and early life, Ishmael Worth would seem to be the last person on earth who would rise to greatness. But God had different plans. When Ishmael was born, his Aunt Hannah secretly wished that the tiny, unwanted child would just die and put himself and her out of their misery. But even as a baby, Ishmael fought on and exceeded the expectations of all of those around him. Hannah would one day recognize that it was God who had kept that little child alive when she in her human mind had wished him dead. "But as it is written: 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor

have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” 1

Corinthians 2:9

Despite its literary flaws, Ishmael is endearing for its engaging plot and its encouraging lessons. As you can see, it has even made my Top 10 list. I encourage you to give it a try and introduce yourself to a character that you will not soon forget.

THIS REVIEW WAS FIRST POSTED BY BOOKWORMANS

<http://completeandunabridged.blogspot...>

Moaning says

What a terrible disappointment... after a very slow start the book became interesting and yet ended abruptly without any resolution... to be continued in a sequel. Really 523 pages and she couldn't wrap up the story? Even worse the only admirable character who is without fault throughout the entire novel falls in the end? I feel robbed.

Anna Eskut says

Ishmael is one of the most encouraging and inspiring books I have ever read. Ishmael's parents have a unique and gripping story, and Ishmael suffers ridicule for their unintentional failures. Ishmael is the kind of person everyone should want to be. He is humble and kind, no matter what happens, and he always puts others before himself. His aunt raises him, and even though she is often very harsh and he is often starving, he takes care of her without a word of complaint. He has a hunger for learning and has the potential to be much smarter than his peers. Once he gets the opportunity to go to school he far surpasses everyone in his class, soaking up knowledge. This is truly a story of someone rising from the depths of ignorance and poverty to meet his potential for greatness.

Eva says

Kind of Elsie Dinsmore-ish, but it held my interest and there were some good parts. I'll probably read the sequel in the future.

Travis Binkley says

This is an amazingly awesome book. I've read it seven times. It was written over one hundred years ago (published in 1876). I highly recommend this book. My older brother and my two older sisters have all read this book, and they all thought it was one of the best books they've ever read.

Sunny Kwok says

I never write reviews but this book was so good I had to write one. This book reminded me of “Jane Eyre” and “Little Men” which I love but “Ishmael” had so much more!! It’s impossible not to fall in love with Ismael and as a mother I couldn’t help to desire my sons to become like him in his character. I can’t wait to read the sequel and hopefully one day own them so I can reread them!

Jodie Randisi says

I was given Ishmael and Self-Raised by a friend at a Toastmasters conference. Her husband was kind enough to retrieve these precious old books from their book shelf so I could read them. I'm so impressed with the story that I, along with my new friends, think it is prime material for a Netflix series. As a screenwriter, I've never attempted a period piece but here I go! My minds wanders while reading these books...how did the author write all these illustrious words without a computer? The dialog with accents can be (for me) a might distracting, but this effort gives her characters authenticity. I couldn't put these two books down. I ordered a copy for myself from abebooks.com because a listing there said two volumes in one, published by New York Book Company, 1910. It was only volume 1.

Rachel says

This book (and it's sequel Self-Raised) is BEAUTIFUL. The plot line is so intense and you get so emotionally drawn into the story. SOuthworth's style is typical for the period, but her surprising plot twists set her apart for me from other writers of the time. She doesn't develop her characters as deeply as say, Jane Austen (who compares to her anyway?) but the chracters are lovable (and despicable) and aren't too "perfect", if you know what I mean. You will adore the main character and wish to be like him. If you do read Ishmael, make sure you have Self-Raised (the sequel) at hand because the book ends on a terrible cliff hanger.

Bah! Humbug! says

well written interesting story, but has issues with racism. It's sad because her views would have been progressive at the time, but today this book may be too offensive for many to read which will drive them away from an otherwise good story.

Ivy Miranda says

Finding a good story, with a strong hero that has good Christian morals, but doesn't come off as too good to be true can be difficult. However, Ishmael Worth's story from obscure, poor beginnings and his journey to become a respectable gentleman in pre-Civil War American society, really has the makings of a great Christian hero.

Ishmael was written by E.D.E.N. Southworth in 1876 and is loosely inspired by the life of Ishmael Worth who became the first man to ever defend a woman in court. Ishmael's life started with love and loss. His parents came from two polar opposite social circles. His father, Herman Brudenell, is immensely wealthy while his mother, Nora Worth, although beautiful and generous, comes from the poorest class. They meet, fall in love and marry in secret, but like all tragic love stories, they are separated. Herman leaves for Europe while his heartbroken bride dies in childbirth to their son, whom Herman is unaware of.

Now, orphaned and alone, little Ishmael Worth is raised by his strict spinster aunt, Hannah Worth. From a young age, Ishmael is instilled with a strong work ethic, the importance of education and the strength of faith in God. These three qualities begin to mold Ishmael from a destitute child to a young man whose life is forever challenged by the immoral acts of others.

Yet, with each challenge, fight, victory and even losses, Ismael continues to persevere and grow. In his early age he witnesses injustices done to those of a lower social status and the abuse of power; which eventually leads him to pursue a life of jurisprudence or simply, he wants to become a defense lawyer.

When he's not out on the course of justice, Ishmael's heart seems to set a course of his own. He finds himself in love with a beautiful, but vain and selfish young heiress, Claudia Merlin. Yet, Claudia, so wrapped up in herself, is clueless to Ishmael's pining heart. Meanwhile, Claudia's sweet cousin, Beatrice "Bee" Middleton is madly in love with Ishmael, but he only sees Bee as a sister and nothing more.

And then of course, we have Ishmael's big court case...but I don't want give anything away :)

To sum it all up then:

So, we have a coming of age, rags to riches character that's the paragon of the American dream. Christianity is important to the story, but is not too preachy. It's simply a part of Ishmael's growing up and is the moral foundation of his life. Ishmael is described as being extremely handsome, but his description is summed up in a few sentences instead of three or four paragraphs (thank goodness).

Are there times when Ishmael comes off as too good to be true? Absolutely. Yet, there is something endearing and likable about him too. He stands up to injustice and tyranny without breaking a sweat, but becomes an awkward idiot around his crush, while he is utterly clueless to the one woman who is completely perfect for him.

I'm not sure if Ishmael Worth was real or if he is based on someone else, but the character and story of Ishmael is truly inspiring. People may compare Ishmael to the Christian likes of Elsie Dinsmore, but they are hardly the same given their circumstances in life. Yet, the moral Christian themes of faith, standing for those who cannot stand for themselves, honesty, integrity and unwavering faith in God remains the same in both characters.

I found Ishmael to be a wonderful story, Ishmael himself, to be a great character who is forever on the pursuit of bettering himself for the benefit of honoring the God that he loves. And in so doing can better the people and the world around him.

Ishmael's story has even made it into the movies! The 1921 silent film, Hearts of Youth is based on the original Ishmael novel, but primarily focuses on the romance between him and Beatrice.

Hosanna says

As soon as I held this book in my hands, I knew it would be a good read. The leather cover is beautiful and soft and so antique looking!! Goodreads's picture really doesn't do it justice.

For those who enjoy old-fashioned language, a slow-paced story, and Christian morals, *Ishamel* by E.D.E.N. Southworth is a perfect book. It covers the life of a young man who climbs out of the depths of poverty to achieve the goals God set before him. Ishmael is an inspiring individual with an intriguing history. The book has around 100 pages of backstory before Ishmael is even born. There are many threads woven together in this story, which is partly why I didn't give it a full 5 stars. After 500+ pages, the threads are still hanging, waiting to be tied together in the sequel, *Self Raised*. After such a long book, I wanted a conclusive finish.

Other than the fact that this historical-fiction book felt long and sometimes slow-paced, it was a very good read. I'm interested in learning more about Ishmael's life. Some reviewers compared this to the novel *Elsie Dinsmore*. The writing is similar, but I felt like Elsie's life was more interesting to read about - perhaps her books were just less drawn out and long.

I enjoyed E.D.E.N. Southworth's novel, old-fashioned language, and story of a protagonist who didn't allow boundaries to keep him from achieving God's plan for his life.

Marianne West says

I have a very early edition of this book that belonged to my mother. Inside the book was a preface that really intrigued me, and I want to share an excerpt from it. This is in reference to the main character: "His identity will be recognized by those who were familiar with his early personalized history; but for obvious reasons his real name must be veiled under a fictitious one here". There is more in the preface but this statement piqued my interest and gave me a challenge to research. I think I know, but will not mention who, because there are some differences. My theory regarding the differences is that the author not only veiled the name, but also veiled some locations etc., in order to protect his identity. I love this book and the sequel and give both 5 stars. The sequel "Self Raised", does not appear to a part of the historical person in whom I guessed, so I could be wrong on my guess.

Jean Gobel says

A good 1800's read, somewhat melodramatic. Ishmael was born in poverty to a young mother who died in childbirth, remains unacknowledged by his unknown father - unknown to everyone except Aunt Hannah. Hannah, who promised her dying sister never to relate the name of the boy's father, only that they had indeed been lawfully married, was not happy to raise this child of her sister's, and indeed for some time, wished he would die. But Ishmael survived. He grew to have a loving personality, deep moral and religious convictions, and intelligence and ability beyond his years. This is a story of a person who, given the opportunity and means, works to pull himself up the ladders of society and success. It is also the story of a love that cannot be. Social taboos of the time dictate the future of our hero, as he struggles to achieve. Things are not resolved in this book, but since you have been drawn into the story of this "pure-hearted" young man, you find it absolutely necessary to read the sequel!

