



The Letters of Abelard and Heloise (Penguin Classics)

By Peter Abelard, Heloise

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One of the world's most celebrated and tragic love affairs

Through the letters between Abelard and Heloise, we follow the path of their 12th-century romance, from its reckless and ecstatic beginnings when Heloise became Abelard's pupil, through the suffering of public scandal and enforced secret marriage, to their eventual separation.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Abelard and Heloise are nearly as famous a pair of tragic lovers as the fictional Romeo and Juliet; their shared passion for knowledge, religious faith, and one another sealed their destiny. Abelard was a well-respected, 12th-century Parisian scholar and teacher, and Heloise was his talented young student. The two relate their story through a set of letters to one another and intimate acquaintances. Their ardor is unmistakable; as Abelard writes to his love, "So intense were the fires of lust which bound me to you that I set those wretched, obscene pleasures, which we blush even to name, above God as above myself..." This forbidden lust resulted in a pregnancy and secret marriage, and when their union could no longer withstand the challenges in its path, each lover sought refuge in the church--Abelard became a monk and Heloise an abbess. Their correspondence continued as both achieved success in their new careers but continued to struggle with their feelings for one another; the set of letters powerfully articulates the wide range of emotions they experienced. So timeless is their love story that--after eight centuries--their passion, their devotion, and their struggle still resonate with readers.

Language Notes

Text: English, Latin (translation)

About the Author

Peter Abelard was a French philosopher and the greatest logician of the 12th century. He taught in Paris, where Heloise was his pupil. After the tragic end of their marriage, she became a nun and he a monk.

Betty Radice was the editor of the Penguin Classics during the 1960s and 70s and an acclaimed translator from Latin, Greek & Italian.

Michael Clanchy researches at the Institute of Historical Research UCL and the Warburg Institute.

Users Review

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Terrance Allen:

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