**Gone with the Wind**, an American novel by Margaret Mitchell, was published in 1936 and won the Pulitzer Prize in 1937. It was the only book that Margaret Mitchell published in her lifetime, but it became one of the best selling American novels. The film version of the novel won ten academy awards, including Best Picture of 1939.

**Title**
The title is taken from the first line of the third stanza of the poem *Non Sum Qualis eram Bonae Sub Regno Cynarae* by Ernest Dowson: "I have forgot much, Cynara! gone with the wind." It is also taken from a line spoken by Scarlett O'Hara in the book. When her hometown is overtaken by the Yankees, she wonders if her home is still standing, or if it too is "gone with the wind" that swept through Georgia.

**Plot summary**
Mitchell's work relates the story of a rebellious Georgia Southern belle named Scarlett O'Hara and her experiences with friends, family, lovers, and enemies before, during, and after the Civil War. Using Scarlett's life, Mitchell examined the effect of the War on the old order of the south, and the aftermath of the war on what was left of the southern aristocracy.

**Part One**
The novel opens at Tara, the O'Hara plantation in Georgia, with Scarlett O'Hara flirting idly with Brent and Stuart Tarleton, twin brothers who live on a nearby plantation. Amidst the chatter, the pair tell Scarlett that Ashley Wilkes, the man Scarlet secretly loves, and his cousin Melanie Hamilton, a plain and gentle lady from Atlanta, are to be married. Scarlett sits in silence until the two leave. Scarlett hurries to find her father, Gerald O'Hara, to confirm the news. She finds him jumping his horse, though as Scarlett reminds him, he promised her mother Ellen that he would not. After vowing to keep his reckless behavior a secret, Scarlett probes her father for information. Gerald confirms that Ashley plans to marry Melanie. He sharply warns Scarlett that she and Ashley would make a terrible match. On the porch, Scarlett and her father encounter Ellen, who is rushing out to help baptize Emmie Slattery's dying newborn. Mammy, an old slave who has been with Ellen since childhood, does not think Ellen should help the unwed Emmie, whose "white trash" family lives adjacent to the O'Hara plantation.

After discovering the truth of the engagement, Scarlett is miserable but realizes that Ashley has no idea that she's in love with him. She plans to make Ashley jealous by surrounding herself with boys in love with her at the barbecue the next day at the Wilkes plantation of Twelve Oaks, and then afterwards admit to him that she prefers him above all others. Among the fawning gentlemen is shy Charles Hamilton, Melanie’s brother, and Frank Kennedy, her sister Suellen's beau. Things do not go according to plan; when she finds Ashley later, he tells her that though he loves her, he will still marry Melanie. The unreceived Rhett Butler, hidden behind a couch during the emotional scene, sees Scarlett throw a vase across the room in anger after Ashley leaves and is impressed by her fire. Charles Hamilton, himself in love with Scarlett, proposes later in the evening, and to hurt Ashley she accepts, to the great distress of Ashley’s sister Honey Wilkes, who, it was generally understood, was intended for Charles just as Melanie was intended for Ashley.

Overall, the barbecue presents an idyllic view of the antebellum South, with its well-organized plantations, content slaves, and benevolent masters. Tension is on the horizon, however, as the men at the barbecue discuss war, and all are greatly in support of it with the exception of Rhett Butler.

Both couples marry within two weeks, with Scarlett bitterly regretting her decision but receiving a warm welcome from Melanie, who now considers Scarlett to be her sister. Two months later, after going away to war, Charles dies of the measles, confirming in Scarlett's opinion his unheroic weakness. Once a girl who loved balls and dances and boys, Scarlett is relegated to the very strict, sombre, and prolonged mourning rituals of the day, consisting of black dresses and veils for years, and living a quiet life at home, rarely venturing out. She is more distressed over her boredom than at Charles’ death, but her mother, believing Scarlett to be pining away from a broken heart, sends her to Atlanta with Scarlett's son, who was named after Charles' commanding officer as was fashionable, Wade Hampton Hamilton, to Charles’ elderly maiden Aunt Pittypat and Melanie, in an attempt to raise her spirits.
Part Two  
Chapters VIII to XVI

In Atlanta, Scarlett quickly inserts herself into the hustle and bustle of the city. Melanie, whom Scarlett secretly despises for having married Ashley, and for what she sees as her weak, compliant nature, treats Scarlett like a sister and is blind to Scarlett's contempt and jealousy. Later, there is a charity ball in the city to raise funds for the war, which Scarlett, being in mourning, was not supposed to attend. Luckily Scarlett, Melanie, and Aunt Pittypat are requested to fill in for someone, and this excites Scarlett as it was her first source of entertainment in her widowhood. Still Scarlett sulks; her status as a widow prevents her from dancing. She is relegated to selling things for the Confederate cause, which she does not care about. When a donation basket goes around for jewelry to sell for the Confederacy, Scarlett throws in her wedding ring, seizing upon a way to be rid of it without invoking public censure. Melanie, misconstruing Scarlett's motives, places her (dearly cherished) ring in the basket as well. Rhett Butler slyly observes the scene. Later, Dr. Meade announces that the gentlemen must bid for the girl of their choice to be their dance partner. After several rounds of bidding, Rhett Butler bids 150 dollars in gold (more prized than the shaky Confederate money) for Mrs. Charles Hamilton, and against popular outrage, Scarlett accepts. She gleeefully dances all night with Rhett, and the next day Melanie receives her ring back from Rhett, who had redeemed it for far more than its face value, along with a kindly note. (Scarlett notes that he didn't return hers as well.) Scarlett believes that he did so only to be allowed into Aunt Pittypat's house, not sensing that, despite any ulterior motives on his part, he is genuinely touched by Melanie's devotion to Ashley and the pain it cost her to give up her ring.

The war continues with Scarlett in Atlanta, and she spends time with Rhett when he calls at the house (he is ostensibly calling on Aunt Pittypat, as widows cannot receive male callers), though he infuriates her. Ashley visits for Christmas, and Scarlett jealously watches Melanie give him a beautiful coat of precious grey wool, while all she has for him is a scarf. The day Ashley leaves, Scarlett again reveals her feelings to him, hoping Ashley will also break down and allow himself to tell Scarlett that he loves her too. But Ashley has a more important matter to discuss with Scarlett. He tells her the war is coming to a close and the South is going to fall. The nature of this disaster will place those things which are most dear to him (his wife Melanie and her unborn child) in deadly peril. Because he knows, admires, and even loves the strength of Scarlett, Ashley (relying on Scarlett's love and honor to him) makes Scarlett promise him that she will look after Melanie and see his family through the upcoming crisis. Ashley knows that his first duty is to be with his men at the front, so he can't be there to protect his family. Therefore, the safest place for them he can think of is in the care of Scarlett O'Hara. Scarlett loves Ashley so much, and is at this point in her life so much under his spell, that she agrees to his promise. Throughout this and the next section of the novel she never fails to look after the woman and child whom she resents, and who stand squarely in the way of getting the one thing in the world she really wants, Ashley Wilkes. After her promise, Ashley heads for the door, but Scarlett clings to him desperately and they share a passionate kiss goodbye. Scarlett sobs that she loves him and that she only married Charles to hurt him. Ashley says nothing and wrenches himself from her grasp, hurrying from the house and his immoral love for Scarlett. Scarlett and Melanie subsequently learn that Ashley has been taken prisoner by the Union Army, leaving them questioning whether he is even alive.

Part Three  
Chapters XVII to XXX

Slowly, the tide of war turns against the South. Atlanta is bombarded constantly. Melanie helps to nurse the injured in overflowing hospitals, and Scarlett reluctantly joins her. Finally, the Yankees begin their march on Atlanta, and the city evacuates. However, Melanie is pregnant, and because Scarlett promised Ashley that she would take care of her, Scarlett is obliged to stay with her through her labor as the Yankees begin their siege. After Melanie gives birth, Scarlett sends her maid, a dimwitted slave named Prissy, for Rhett Butler to come and take them out of Atlanta. Eventually, Rhett shows up with a broken-down horse and carriage that he stole from the army and carts the weakened Melanie, her infant son Beau, Scarlett's son Wade, Prissy, and Scarlett out of Atlanta. He abandons them on the road back to Tara to fight for the South, even though he knows it's a lost cause and on the point of collapse, but not before giving Scarlett a kiss and telling her that he loves her.
Part Four

Chapters XXXI to XLVII

Tara's former evil Yankee overseer Jonas Wilkerson, newly a Scalawag, raises the taxes on Tara to force the O'Haras out; his new wife Emmie Slattery, whom he impregnated, wants to live there. Scarlett plans to go to Atlanta to get Rhett to give her the money to pay the taxes. She has her always faithful Mammy make her a dress out of Tara's velvet portiers, one of the few original things left in the mansion after the Yankee looting. She finds Rhett in jail, and when he tells her he can't give her the money and marry her, she offers to trade sexual favors, which he also declines, saying he genuinely cannot access the money. Desperate, she sees Frank Kennedy, newly a store-owner, and lies that Suellen is to marry someone else. Frank, saddened by Suellen's supposed defection and, like all men, unable to resist Scarlett's charms, marries her and gives her the tax money. After Rhett gets out of jail, he goes to make sure Scarlett got the money she needed and lends her more so that she can buy a sawmill, with the promise that she will not use the money to help Ashley Wilkes. Though horrified at her unladylike behavior, Frank cowers whenever she flares up at him when he questions her actions. During this time, Scarlett gets pregnant, and she scrambles to get her monies in order before the birth, earning the ire of the Old Guard by showing herself in public when pregnant, and doing well in business.

While pregnant, Scarlett gets notice that her father Gerald has died. After returning to Tara for the funeral, Scarlett hears from Will that Suellen had tried to get Gerald to betray the Confederacy by signing the Ironclad Oath for money, and realizing this, Gerald had flown into a rage, tried to jump a fence with a horse, and broken his neck. The Old Guard despised Suellen for this, but Scarlett agreed with her. Will then spoke at the funeral to prevent the Old Guard from berating Suellen, then announced his intention to marry her, although he had always loved Carreen. Carreen enters a convent instead, as had been her inclination. Scarlett and her sisters exclaim upon how poorly some of their friends are doing following the
war—they are gradually turning into ""themselves, unable to keep up their former lifestyles. After the funeral, Scarlett manipulates Ashley into returning to Atlanta with her to run her sawmill, in order to prevent him from leaving for the North to find work. Being dependent on Scarlett and having to do this work ends up breaking Ashley's spirit and his independence. Ashley turns out to be a poor manager, so Scarlett decides to use convicts at the sawmill for labor to save money, a shocking decision.

While driving alone to and from the sawmill, a form of boldness which is frowned upon by her neighbors, Scarlett is assaulted by a poor white man and his black companion who live in a shantytown in the woods with many other former slaves. Big Sam, her former slave, appears and fights off the attackers. Sam then jumps into Scarlett's carriage and drives her to safety as she collapses in sobs. To avenge her, Frank, Ashley, and the rest of the local men in the KKK raid the shantytown where Scarlett was jumped. Not knowing this, Scarlett complains to the women sitting with her of Frank's carelessness towards her for going to a "political meeting" after the assault. A group of Yankee soldiers arrive at the house and ask for Ashley, and stand outside to wait for his return. Rhett, having gone after the KKK men, brings Ashley and the rest back, with them seemingly staggering drunk. After claiming that they were at Belle Watling's house (a house of prostitution), Rhett persuades the Yankees to leave, whereupon it is discovered that the gentlemen were feigning drunkenness, and in fact Ashley is injured, and Frank is dead. Ashley and Belle give testimony the next morning of their whereabouts the night before. Afterwards, Rhett proposes to Scarlett, wanting to be sure to get her before she marries someone else. Belle stops by Melanie's house in a closed carriage to see how Ashley is doing. Melanie warmly thanks her for saving her husband and promises to recognize Belle in the street. She expresses her intention to call on Belle again in the future, and Belle is scandalized at this "impropriety." Belle is concerned that someone may recognize her carriage and releases Melanie from having to greet her in the future saying that she'll understand.

Part Five
Chapters XLVIII to LXIII
Scarlett marries Rhett Butler and goes to New Orleans for her honeymoon. He comforts her in her nightmares, feeds her rich things, dresses her in expensive gowns, and generally spoils her. The only thing he refuses is to help her help Ashley Wilkes. Scarlett begins spending time with the newly rich Yankees, who are portrayed as having few if any scruples. Scarlett builds a mansion and spends money lavishly. The Old Guard decide to cut Scarlett and Rhett out of society for the company they keep and the actions they have taken. Only Melanie's undying loyalty keeps Scarlett in the fold at all. Scarlett soon learns that she is pregnant and gives birth to a baby, Eugenie Victoria (Bonnie Blue) Butler, whom Rhett promptly claims and begins to spoil hugely. Scarlett hates the change in her figure from the birth and tells Rhett that she, like Melanie, will have no more children—a secret way for her to stay faithful to Ashley.

One day at the mill, Ashley tells Scarlett that he is jealous of Rhett. Believing this to mean that he still loves her, Scarlett decides that she and Rhett will have separate bedrooms. After she tells Rhett, he claims not to care, and she cries herself to sleep while thinking of missing him in her bed. Rejected by Scarlett, Rhett turns to Bonnie and decides that, though Atlanta hates her parents, Bonnie should have everything. So he turns all of his charm on to win Atlanta over to give Bonnie a chance in the Old Guard.

Soon after, Melanie plans to throw a surprise birthday party for Ashley. Scarlett goes to his mill, and the two chat about old times at Twelve Oaks. They hug as friends. However, India Wilkes and Archie see, and as both have suspected Scarlett's feelings for Ashley for a long time, they jump to conclusions and spread the rumor among everyone. Later that night, Rhett, having heard from Archie, forces Scarlett out of bed and to the party, wearing her most shocking clothes. Scarlett goes with dread. But Melanie, as always, stands by Scarlett's side so that all know that she believes the rumor to be false, even asking her to receive guests with her. Melanie is incapable of believing anything bad of Scarlett, her beloved sister-in-law who saved her life and her son Beau's life amidst the Siege of Atlanta.

Later that night, Scarlett accidentally finds Rhett downstairs, drunk and showing it, as he has never done. Blind with jealousy, he tells Scarlett that he loves her and would kill her to make her forget Ashley. Picking her up, he carries her up the stairs and ostensibly rapes her, although Scarlett does not recognize it as such and believes it, at least initially, to be consensual. However, Scarlett wakes up alone, with Rhett staying away because he is horrified at his actions. Two days later when Rhett returns, they have a very cold reunion. Rhett takes Bonnie on an extended trip abroad. All of Atlanta chooses sides between India and Scarlett, but Melanie fiercely supports Scarlett and rejects India, her husband's sister.
Scarlett discovers that she is pregnant, and for the first time, she is glad. However, when Rhett returns after three months with a cold greeting, she is repulsed and she meets him with equal coldness and tells him she doesn't want the baby. Hurt, Rhett scornfully says, "Cheer up, maybe you'll have a miscarriage." Enraged, Scarlett tries to claw him, falls down the stairs, and actually has a miscarriage. Rhett, frantic with guilt, cries to Melanie about his jealousy but refrains from telling her about Scarlett's true feelings for Ashley, as he knows Melanie would never believe it, or be utterly crushed if she did.

After recovering at Tara, Scarlett is tricked by Rhett into selling the sawmills to Ashley. Rhett spends his time edging Bonnie back into Southern society. However, shortly thereafter, Bonnie dies while trying to jump her horse, just as her grandfather Gerald O'Hara did. Scarlett blames Rhett, Rhett blames himself, and they refuse to see each other, though Scarlett secretly regrets what she said and desperately wants to see him. She says she will even have another baby to get rid of that look in his eyes.

Scarlett soon receives word that Melanie is dying. Though she was not supposed to have any more children, she became pregnant, and her weak constitution couldn't handle it. On her deathbed, Melanie tells Scarlett to watch out for Ashley and to be good to Rhett because he loves her so. Scarlett realizes that she never loved Ashley, she only loved the idea of the noble, chivalrous South that he represented. But really she despises his weakness. However, when she tells Rhett this, he replies, "My dear, I don't give a damn," and he says he will leave for Charleston, refusing Scarlett's plea to come along and claiming that he is no longer in love with her. Scarlett cannot think of anything to do. Finally, with newly dawned realization of true love, she sits at the foot of the stairs exhausted, telling herself in her characteristic style that she will think about her problems the next day. Being her strong self, she calms down and decides to go back to Tara and think of a solution as she still believes that she has the charm to get any man she sets designs upon. The book ends with Scarlett's proclamation: "After all, tomorrow is another day!"

**Characters:**

**Butler Household**
- **Scarlett O'Hara** – protagonist, willful and spoiled Southern belle. Scarlett will do anything to keep her land and get what she wants.
- **Rhett Butler** – Scarlett's love interest and third husband, often publicly shunned for scandalous behavior, sometimes accepted for his charm. Perfect man's man, and can also drink everyone under the table.
- **Wade Hampton Hamilton** – Scarlett and Charles's shy, timid son.
- **Ella Lorena Kennedy** – Scarlett and Frank's silly, homely daughter.
- **Eugenie Victoria "Bonnie" Butler** – Scarlett and Rhett's pretty, beloved, pampered daughter

**Wilkes Household**
- **Ashley Wilkes** – the man Scarlett loves, Melanie's husband, a dreamer and a gentleman.
- **Melanie Hamilton Wilkes** – Ashley's wife, Scarlett's sister-in-law, a true lady. Called "mealy-mouth" by Scarlett, but she quietly has a backbone of steel.
- **Beau Wilkes** – Melanie's and Ashley's lovable son, delivered by Scarlett.
- **India Wilkes** – Ashley's sister. Almost engaged to Stuart Tarleton, she bitterly hates Scarlett for stealing his attention before he is killed at Gettysburg.
- **John Wilkes**; Owner of Twelve Oaks Plantation and patriarch of the Wilkes family

**O'Hara Household**
- **Mammy** – Scarlett's nurse from birth; a slave. Cited by Rhett as "the real head of the household."
- **Gerald O'Hara** – Scarlett's slightly coarse Irish father.
- **Ellen O'Hara** – Scarlett's beloved mother, of aristocratic French ancestry, a true southern lady.
- **Suellen O'Hara** – Scarlett's younger sister, whiny and lazy.
- **Carreen O'Hara** – Scarlett's youngest sister, gentle and kind.
- **Pork** – first and loyal slave of Gerald O'Hara.
- **Dilcey** – Pork's wife, purchased from Twelve Oaks.
- **Prissy** – slave daughter of Dilcey, silly and foolish.
- **Rosa** – Upstairs maid.
- **Teena** – Upstairs maid.
- **Jack** – Dining room servant.
Big Sam – Overseer and slave; rescues Scarlett in Shantytown.

Other Characters
Charles Hamilton – Melanie's brother, Scarlett's first husband, shy.
Frank Kennedy – Suellen's former beau, Scarlett's second husband, soft.
Belle Watling – wealthy prostitute, Rhett is her friend and loyal customer.
Jonas Wilkerson – former overseer of Tara, father of Emmie Slattery's illegitimate baby.
Emmie Slattery – later wife of Jonas Wilkerson,
Will Benteen – Confederate soldier who seeks refuge at Tara, staying on to help with the plantation, a very easy man to talk to and he marries Suellen to keep Tara going, even though he is in love with Carreen.
Aunt Pittypat – lives in Atlanta with Melanie and Scarlett while the men are at war. she faints a lot.
Archie – Scarlett's driver to the lumber mill. He protects her from any more attacks.

Setting:
Fayetteville, Georgia; where most of the book takes place.
Tara Plantation – The O'Hara home and plantation
Peachtree Street – location of Aunt Pittypat's home in Atlanta, where much of the book takes place, and of Scarlett and Rhett's own large house.
New Orleans - Rhett and Scarlett's honeymoon spot.

Politics:
Many historians regard the book as having a strong ideological commitment to the cause of the Confederacy and a romanticized view of the culture of the antebellum South.
The book includes a vivid description of the fall of Atlanta in 1864 and the devastation of war (some of it absent from the 1939 film), and shows a considerable amount of historical research. However, Mitchell's sources were almost exclusively Southern writers and historians; according to her biography, Mitchell herself was ten years old before she learned that the South had lost the war. Mitchell's sweeping narrative of war and loss helped the book win the Pulitzer Prize on May 3, 1937.
An episode in the book deals with the early Ku Klux Klan: in the immediate aftermath of the War, Scarlett is assaulted by poor southerners living in shanties, whereupon her former Black slave Sam saves her life. In response, Scarlett's male friends attempt to make a retaliatory night-time raid on the encampment. Northern soldiers try to stop the attacks, and Rhett helps Ashley, who is shot, to get help through his prostitute friend Belle. Scarlett's husband Frank is killed. This raid is presented sympathetically as being necessary and justified, while the law-enforcement officers trying to catch the perpetrators are depicted as oppressive Northern occupiers.
Although the Klan is not mentioned in that scene, it is mentioned that Scarlett finds the Klan abominable and believes the men should all just stay at home (though this is motivated mostly by a selfish desire to both be petted for her ordeal and to give the hated Yankees no more reason to tighten martial law, which is bad for her businesses). Rhett is also mentioned to be not great lover of the Klan, though he says at one point that if it is necessary he will join in an effort to integrate well into society. The novel never explicitly states whether or not this drastic step was necessary in his view. The local chapter later breaks up under the pressure from Rhett and Ashley.
Scarlett expresses views that were common of the era. Some examples:
"How stupid negroes were! They never thought of anything unless they were told." — Scarlett thinks to herself, after returning to Tara after the fall of Atlanta.
"How dared they laugh, the black apes!...She'd like to have them all whipped until the blood ran down...What devils the Yankees were to set them free!" — Scarlett again thinking to herself, seeing free blacks after the war.
Scarlett has many spiteful and selfish opinions in the novel, and is callous toward her children, her sisters, and of course Melanie, who has every virtue Scarlett lacks. Whether Mitchell shared Scarlett's views is unknown.
The book is far more open in the matter of freedom of speech than the film, and it leaves no doubt that this was necessary in order to show what people really felt without putting "makeup" that would take the genuinity out of the book.
Inspirations
Several components of Gone with the Wind have parallels with Margaret Mitchell's own life, suggesting her experiences provided some inspiration for the story. Mitchell's understanding of life and hardship during the American Civil War, for example, came from elderly relatives and neighbors passing war stories to her generation. While Margaret Mitchell used to say that her Gone with the Wind characters were not based on real people, modern researchers have found similarities to some of the people in Mitchell's own life as well as to individuals she knew or she heard of. Mitchell's maternal grandmother, Annie Fitzgerald Stephens, was born in 1845; she was the daughter of an Irish immigrant, who owned a large plantation on Tara Road in Clayton County, south of Atlanta, and who married an American woman named Ellen, and had several children, all daughters. Rhett Butler is thought to be based on Mitchell's first husband, Red Upshaw, whom she married in 1922, but divorced after it was revealed that he was a bootlegger. There is much historical evidence that he was actually based on George Trenholm, a famous blockade-runner. See link The Real Rhett Butler Revealed. (It should also be noted here that it is also thought he was modeled after Sir Godfrey Barnsley of Adairsville, Georgia. After a stay at the plantation called The Woodlands, and later Barnsley Gardens, Mitchell may have gotten the inspiration for the dashing scoundrel.)
Another at least partial character source for Scarlett O'Hara might have been Martha Bulloch Roosevelt, the mother of US president Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt biographer David McCullough discovered that Mitchell, while a reporter for The Atlanta Journal, conducted an interview with one of Martha's closest friends and bridesmaid, Evelyn King Williams, who was 87. In that interview, Martha's physical appearance, beauty, grace, and intelligence were described in great detail. The similarities between Martha, who was also called Mittie, and Scarlett are striking.