



October 2019 Her Story ENewsletter Pulitzer Prize Winners

Toni Morrison won the Pulitzer Prize in Fiction, as well as the Nobel Prize in Literature. The first black woman of any nationality to win the Nobel Prize in Literature, her citation reads "who in novels characterized by visionary force and poetic import, gives life to an essential aspect of American reality." As a tribute to Morrison who died in August of this year at age 88, we feature other women who have won the Pulitzer Prize: Edith Wharton and Margaret Mitchell. The Pulitzer Prizes were established by newspaper journalist Joseph Pulitzer. They honor excellence in writing, the arts, drama and music.



Edith Wharton

Writer **Edith Wharton** wrote novels, short stories and plays; she became the first woman to win the Pulitzer Prize. That occurred in 1921 for her novel *The Age of Innocence*. Although she did not win, Wharton was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1927, 1928 and 1930.

Born to a wealthy and socially prominent family during American's Civil War, Wharton's family spent the years of the War abroad, and she became fluent in several languages. She also wrote from an early age. After her family's return to the U.S., her poetry was published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, a prominent literary magazine at that time. During her adult life, Wharton spent much of her time abroad. She worked tirelessly in France during World War I for the relief efforts, for which she received France's highest civilian honor. Wharton has been inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame.



Margaret Mitchell

Journalist **Margaret Mitchell** wrote one novel. It became a bestseller, won her the 1937 Pulitzer Prize, and was made into a history-making movie. That novel, *Gone with the Wind*, has sold more than 30 million copies worldwide and has been published in 40 languages. Mitchell decided to base the novel on her native state of Georgia, instead of Virginia, as she was familiar with Georgia history through the stories of Georgia told by her family. Her main character was originally named Pansy but was renamed Scarlett before the book was published. She sold the motion-picture rights within a month of the book's publication.

Mitchell intended to write a sequel to *Gone with the Wind*, but her life ended tragically before she was able to write her intended novel. The 1939 movie won eight of the thirteen Oscars it was nominated for, including the Best Supporting Actress for Hattie McDaniel, the first African American to win an Oscar. Because the movie premiered in Atlanta at a time of racial segregation, the African-American cast members were not able to attend. Interestingly, the movie was the first one shot using nonreflective glass in the movie lenses; the glass was invented by physicist Katharine Blodgett.

Toni Morrison, Edith Wharton, and Margaret Mitchell are among the more than 850 women profiled in our book *Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America*. Women's accomplishments continue to inspire and encourage us all. Continue to help us tell women's stories!

Charlotte Waisman and Jill Tietjen
Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America
www.herstoryatimeline.com
8547 E. Arapahoe Road, PMB J189
Greenwood Village, CO 80112-1430

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