



## A Woman of Substance

*Barbara Taylor Bradford*

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## **A Woman of Substance** Barbara Taylor Bradford

A celebration of an indomitable spirit, here is New York Times bestselling author Barbara Taylor Bradford's dazzling saga of a woman who dared to dream--and to triumph against all odds...

In the brooding moors above a humble Yorkshire village stood Fairley Hall. There, Emma Harte, its oppressed but resourceful servant girl, acquired a shrewd determination. There, she honed her skills, discovered the meaning of treachery, learned to survive, to become a woman, and vowed to make her mark on the world.

In the wake of tragedy she rose from poverty to magnificent wealth as the iron-willed force behind a thriving international enterprise. As one of the richest women in the world Emma Harte has almost everything she fought so hard to achieve--save for the dream of love, and for the passion of the one man she could never have.

Through two marriages, two devastating wars, and generations of secrets, Emma's unparalleled success has come with a price. As greed, envy, and revenge consume those closest to her, the brilliant matriarch now finds herself poised to outwit her enemies, and to face the betrayals of the past with the same ingenious resolve that forged her empire.

## **A Woman of Substance Details**

Date : Published December 1st 2005 by Griffin (first published 1979)

ISBN : 9780312353261

Author : Barbara Taylor Bradford

Format : Paperback 928 pages

Genre : Fiction, Romance, Historical, Historical Fiction, Womens Fiction, Chick Lit

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## **From Reader Review A Woman of Substance for online ebook**

### **Bookscmc says**

My all-time favorite book/story.

I will re-read and re-read this book time and again.

The beginning of a large saga, this book captures the hearts of anyone who loves a great story and one with a young girl named Emma who has a "Plan with a capital P." Emma stays true to her plan and in the meantime we are learning all about her and her circumstances as a young child in poverty. Emma's strength and willpower is inspiring.

Anyone who has a dream of their own will enjoy reading about a young woman who develops into a Woman of Substance indeed in which she creates her own fashion empire. The following books in the same series follow Emma and her posterity into the world of money and lots of it. How money and power have an effect on those left behind and those whom did not work for it lack the appreciation thereof.

An enriching and sweet story, the first of the series of which is my favorite of them all.

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### **Joyce says**

I read this book when it was first published and considered it one of my favorites and a "I must read this book again." Now some 40 years later I have begun to read the series again I have not been disappointed. Yes it is a long book, yes there are long descriptive passages of furniture and clothing, but all of this should remind the reader of the time period in which Emma, her friends, her opponents and her family live. A time not like today but a woman who would most likely succeed in today's world!

As I recall from my previous reading some of the unknown or unanswered information other reviewers are looking for are answered in the remaining books in the series. i recall reading at least 3 but I see now a few more have been added. I plan to reread/read all of them! I look forward to what I remember, what I've forgotten and what the writer found to add in the newest book.

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### **Diane says**

Lovely series! a book of family values: their success, substance...as richly characterize as ever and has great depth..well written..recommend (paperback!)

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### **kingshearte says**

36 pages of insufferably bad writing was enough to convince me that I would not make it through 910 pages

of it. Everything described in such minute detail, with adverbs piled on adjectives piled on multiple subordinate clauses in every sentence. Everything told; nothing shown. It's maddening. A few reviews seem to suggest that it gets at least marginally better after the first section, but I just can't do it. I also gather that the story itself is half decent, so maybe if someone makes a mini-series or something, I'll watch it. But I cannot slog through this atrociously overwrought mess.

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### **Diane Wallace says**

Great series! one of the best novels in print...had to reread it a few times because it was that good, the storyline was well developed along with all the characters. The plotline showed emotional turmoil for its main character (Emma) because it was too much on her family...kudos to the movie also

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### **Maxine says**

Far too long. Far too much "colloquial dialect" in the parts dealing with Emma's young life. If edited, the story could be better, but still not really memorable. This book even contains some very surprising grammatical errors (which were obviously not intentional, as those in Emma and her family's tedious dialect were)

The seduction scene in the cave drags on and on until one thinks the characters will be to old to act upon their desires. Hardly necessary devote that much time leading up to the obvious. As period fiction the book is OK, as historical fiction it doesn't offer much.

Despite Emma's pluckiness, her rise to riches is really only a matter of luck, and also somewhat implausible. I was not impressed. All in all, I expected more from a book that was such a best seller.

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### **Alison says**

I have given other books 5 stars in the past, but this one TRULY deserves it. My mother read this book when it first came out in the late 70's and she still says it was one of her favorite books. She has told me a few times over the years to read it and I always read something different - thinking that a book that was almost as old as I am couldn't possibly be worth the time. I was wrong. However, you aren't going to find a Kindle edition and you're not going to find it in the book section at BJ's, you'll have to get it out of the library - which I hadn't done in years. It's a wonderful book full of history and generations of family with money, power and revenge all mixed together. Head to your local library and find it! It's super long but reads fast and you'll find you can't put it down!

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### **Maggie says**

This book was realistic fiction at its finest. I felt the "nod" of previous works such as Jane Eyre, Pride &

Prejudice, Wuthering Heights, even short stories like "The Yellow Wallpaper"... then put that in a blender with 80s classics like Dallas and Dynasty and you have this fabulous book. This isn't a work for everyone - the early parts of the book are intensely descriptive, again like those great British literature works, listed above, so there is great description of the sweeping moors, the stately manors, etc. This book is a fine wine you savor - and then you find yourself hooked and returning for another slow sip. Admittedly, it became slow in parts, and I found our main character Emma Harte to not be the most likeable person at times, but I found her ambition, and character believable, although it was much to the detriment of caring for her family, but that's the age-old question - can a woman have a high-powered career and a successful family? I wound up enjoying the main character and felt the detailed description of her life painted a true characterization of a complex woman such as she. I enjoyed this fallible character and greatly enjoyed this long book. Again, if you don't enjoy long, sweeping, narrative descriptions of people & places, don't go for this book. If you enjoy this, then give it a go : )

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### **Suzanne says**

I think this is the first grown up book I read. I recall reading it in bed when I was having a sleepover at my aunts and uncles house when my parents were away. If I needed babysitting perhaps I was to young to be reading this?! I do want to re-read this though. Those were the days of reading whenever and however. Nice to reminisce. I wonder if this is like Danielle Steele?! Which I do like of course!

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### **Julie says**

A Woman of Substance by Barbara Taylor Bradford is a 2014 RosettaBooks publication. (originally published in 1979)

A Classic saga that stands the test of time-

This is the story of Emma Harte, a poverty ridden young woman employed by a wealthy family, who eventually works her way to the top of a rich and powerful business empire. Her personal disappointments, hardships, loves and losses all play a role in solidifying Emma's fortitude, as her instincts for human nature develops, helping her to become a wizened, formidable businesswoman.

The story begins in the twilight of Emma's life as she sits on top of the world basking in the daily operations of her empire and all the accoutrements of her vast wealth. But, when she is informed that forces are working to overthrow her, taking her decision -making authority away- she sets a plan in action...

But, as she schemes to preempt a coup de grace, the reader is transported back in time to Emma's humble beginnings, following her through the years as she builds her business, makes friends and enemies, makes fateful decisions, falls passionately in love, all while plotting her revenge against the powerful family that betrayed her.

In 1979, this book was of zero interest to me, but I think I vaguely remember hearing some buzz about it. I think it was one of those books everyone was reading and talking about, especially those a few years older than me. But, I was in my mid-teens when the book was published, and I just didn't find many long family sagas of interest. It wasn't until a few years later, after I graduated from high school that I began to read

anything besides horror or mystery novels. Still, I don't recall reading anything by this author. (although there were some passages in this book that seemed vaguely familiar) I did, however, read plenty of Judith Krantz, Barbara Delinsky, Danielle Steel, and Jackie Collins- to name a few. But, over the years, the historical sagas- the ones that continued over several subsequent installments became a huge favorite of mine- but still I didn't put this book in that category, for some reason.

There was even a movie based on this book, which was also well- received, but I have no memory of watching that either. My taste and interest changed many times over the years, and on many occasions I felt a pang of regret for missing out on so many great books in my teenage and young adult years- this book being one of them. Many times, I have thought to read this book, but, with a such a huge TBR pile and review deadlines, the length of the book deterred me. However, when I realized the book was in digital format- and in the Kindle Unlimited program I decided to finally take the plunge.

Now I am asking myself why on earth it took my so long to read this book! I loved it!! This story once again reminds me of how much I miss those epic sagas!! Emma's life story was an amazing journey, and she is an inspiration and model of true grit and determination. There's nothing better than a 'rags to riches' story, especially when it features a smart woman willing to do what it takes to become successful. Emma got a few lucky breaks, but mainly she was smart, thought ahead, and worked hard. Her drive may have stemmed from unhealthy emotions at times, but who could blame her? It just made her success that much sweeter!!

There are several more additions to this long running saga and I can not wait to read them!! I see now why this book was so popular and remained so for decades, and why so many people still say it is one of their favorite books of all time.

In the meantime, I hope the family saga makes a comeback in one form or another. They really are awesome!

5 stars

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### **Carlin Hauck says**

I'm not entirely certain how I feel about *A Woman of Substance*. It was a NYT Bestseller in the 1970s, so I feel like the writing style, etc was a bit dated. My main complaints were that the author loved to use big, impressive words and described everything in super detail. I'm all for using good vocab, but sometimes a simple word does the job best. Also, the dialogue seemed a bit forced and unnatural, and the main character HAD NO FAULTS. None. Except that she was born poor. It was kind of irritating at times that this poor little servant girl was brilliant, had a natural talent for designing and sewing clothing, was an excellent businesswoman, was absolutely breathtakingly beautiful, could cook better than anyone else, could work 24/7 and never needed sleep, was kind and fair in personal matters, but shrewd and cunning in business matters, etc etc etc. I was like... really? Anyway, considering that I read 900 pages in a week, clearly I didn't hate it. It kept me interested the whole way through, and the story was good, albeit a little unbelievable.

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### **Lisa (Harmonybites) says**

I love historical fiction, and to my mind there aren't enough that focus on the drama of building a business, so the premise of this appealed to me. It's the rag to riches story of a British woman who went from lowly

maid to powerful head of a business empire in the early 20th century when women weren't by and large able to rise to such heights.

However, the writing style here was puerile romance aisle, and far too wretched to make me willing to stay with this for over 900 trade paperback pages. Within ten pages we have such cliched and purple writing as "implacable mouth" and eyes "cold as steel," (Emma Harte's, our heroine--they're green--classic Mary Sue color--as is those of her granddaughter protege--those are "violet.") and loads of adverb, adjective and simile prose pile-ups and dizzying point of view shifts. I guess there's something to be said for getting engrossed in a trashy book, but I knew dozens, let alone hundreds of pages of this would drive me insane.

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### **Erin says**

When I first began reading this book, I didn't think I was going to be able to make it through. There were a few things this author did that caused me some minor annoyances. It was hard to develop any true feeling toward Emma in the beginning of the book because many of her thoughts seemed contradictory. The beginning is really slow going. Also, this author likes to make extremely long-winded descriptions of interiors, which I find detract from the plot, especially when a character is ruminating on important things and these ruminations are interrupted with a long description. Not only this, but the author then communicates how each room fits each character's traits and how these rooms say something important about that character, which is something I felt I could have figured out on my own and which was a further waste of page space. She also knocks you over the head with the fact that Emma has an iron will and that she's extremely ambitious. I really felt that Emma's actions could have spoken for themselves and that this repeated reminder of her strengths was unnecessary.

Having said this, however, I was able to make it through the first part of the book and after this point, I began to really connect with the story. The characters in this book are so real, and many, like Blackie, are lovable. Emma's journey from an impoverished, working-class girl to a powerhouse is extremely satisfying, as are the various ways in which she overcomes challenges. The story is great, the characters wonderful. Ultimately, I enjoyed the book. I would recommend this book only to someone who has a lot of time for reading (the book is quite long) and who is willing to read through the beginning, which is mainly where all the long and technical interior descriptions are; as the book progresses, they tend to get shorter.

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### **Ria Romero says**

Magnificent, a spellbinding saga in life

Advantages: truly captivating, can boost your will

Disadvantages: none

A bestselling book by Barbara Taylor-Bradford, A Woman of Substance is a spellbinding saga in life that will instill within your heart, the will and drive to succeed. This is the first of the six novels about Emma Harte and her family, among others are Hold the Dream, To be the Best, Emma's Secret, Unexpected Blessings and Just Rewards. A Woman of Substance is really one of the best novel that I have read. It was really captivating and enthralling story every woman should read. Her drive to succeed in her life is truly remarkable and the pain that she has gone through was also her strength to survive and enable her to build an empire. It is my habit to make a review of the books I have read and like and my review for this book

which i have written on it's back page is this; "God given us all the finest things in life ... yet we alone are the holder of our own destiny. BTB (Barbara Taylor-Bradford) a name i would never forget. She is an author that brought back my self esteem and my will to go on with my dreams.

Story Excellent

Characters/Performances Excellent

Special Effects Impressive

Soundtrack Average

Did you enjoy it? Loved it

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### **Annie Myers says**

This is a very long, verbose book that has a good story buried among its endless descriptions of, well, just about everything. This book left a lot of unanswered questions in my mind, and there were a lot of times when I was skimming through the long, boring descriptions of Emma's furniture and china and walls and clothes and the color of the sky and the degree of greyness of the clouds - ack!! The interactions between the characters were generally quite good, but it was like slogging through mud to get to them. I found I did not particularly care for BTB's writing style, at all.

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### **Holly says**

I flat out, wholeheartedly love this book. Both the plucky Emma Hart and the sweep of 50 years of history make this a leap-from-the-pages saga. Emma's battle from poverty to high-powered business woman is a dramatic, sensational story and Bradford's prose captures Yorkshire in gorgeously. Anyone who loves a big, breathtaking story will love this. (Also, it's the best of the bunch. Hold the Dream isn't nearly as good, nor are any of its other sequels)

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### **Bria says**

This book boiled down to two words: boring and aggravating.

The plot and book description initially sold me in this book, but I lost interest very quickly when the plot was covered by endless adjectives and praises about the main character, Emma Harte.

It was completely unnecessary and annoying to have the author blab on and on about how great Emma is. How she is a genius, and how she suddenly went from being described as slightly attractive to so beautiful everybody who met her just had to have her!! It was completely unrealistic and Emma grew into more and more of a fake character.

BTB tried writing about the greatest woman she could come up with, but got lost and ended up writing about an unrealistic woman. BTB gave her a perfect personality where Emma possessed every single virtue from intelligence to charity to humility but also strength. Wtf.

Nobody is that perfect or possesses every great virtue. People have to have faults. Also how is Emma

supposed to be a role model for girls and woman if she is unrealistic and born with every single good quality? It is such a cop out to give the advice of "be born a genius and be attractive".

Emma also had ridiculously good luck. When she moved as a single woman to a big city she just happened to meet all kinds of equally smart, nice people?? That is so highly unlikely!!! Everybody Emma worked with seemed to be a carbon copy of one another. They were all attractive (which is shallow writing), nice and humble and good (I was practically chocking every time BTB described some new character as truly good, filled with light.....ugh!!), and somehow where able to give Emma whatever she needed at the opportune time! They were all so two dimensional it was sad.

.....words cannot describe how annoying it was to read about Emma. However the absolute worst point was around page 600. Emma is starting her thriving business, just starting to make profits and in love with David. But oh no! Catastrophe strikes! She simply can't be bothered to marry him because his mom would be mad!?!? Even though his mom apparently loved her a couple chapters before, and Emma is supposed to be all strong and confident, but she can't even marry the man she loves cause she is too afraid their difference in religion would keep them apart???? Why not just convert you idiot????? Emma never cared about religion before this, so why not just go for the man you love and become part of his family???? It was so hypocritical and shallow. And then somehow BTB tries to make the reader feel bad for Emma! Because now she needs a husband, but is too scared to marry David so marries another guy.....poor stupid Emma. BTB should have put some more thought into her main character. By creating this warped personal life, she made Emma into a lonely cold woman who couldn't even fight for her own love and happiness.

If I was her child I probably would have conspired against Emma too. No wonder her children turned out to be such cold spoiled brats! They probably had no love and were all from so many different dads they couldn't keep up with their family tree either.

I was happy when this book ended and won't read anything else from this author.

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### **Linda Hart says**

LOVED IT!!

One of my all-time favorite books, IT CHANGED MY LIFE.

I read it 30 years ago in my bookclub and I am currently re-reading it. I read the series, each about the next generation of the Harte family, and enjoyed them immensely, but each book stands alone with satisfying endings.

A friend described it as a "delicious read," which is an apt description. Another friend refers to it as "your biblical guide for attaining excellence."

I remember devouring every page as I learned more about the central character, Emma Harte, her focused commitment to experience success, her determined belief in herself, and her passionate ability to love. I had read Gone With The Wind, but this was the first novel I ever read that modeled not only what it was like to be a strong woman, but also someone I would recommend as a strong role model to any of my daughters or granddaughters.

A rags-to-riches story, it is about a British woman who begins as a simple maid to become the powerful head of a business empire in the early 20th century. It is a magnificent novel about the strength and commitment one woman has to pull herself out of poverty and the sacrifices she makes to survive and become powerful in an age dominated by men. However only her career ends happily ever after... her personal life was a mess

(something many years after the fact, to which I can personally relate). Yet in the midst of numerous personal trials she found some of the best friends and business partners for life, and (again, as I am able relate) the book has a happy and upbeat conclusion. When the series ended I missed them as I did a dear friend.

Shortly after reading this I read a news article telling about the life of Estee Lauder and the rise of her eponymous cosmetics empire. It was so similar to Emma Harte's story I told my mother, a devotee of all things Estee Lauder, and she recommended [A Woman of Independent Means](#), which I devoured and it was an equally wonderful novel which also changed my life. I believe I recommended both novels to my newly married daughter at the time.

I highly recommend this wonderful novel. Barbara Taylor Bradford is a master storyteller!

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### **Margitte says**

Read it many years ago and loved it. Was a Barbara Taylor Bradford devotee. Just wanted to add it to my books. I've read most of her books.

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### **Joshua says**

*A Woman of Substance* Is a meticulously plotted, extensively detailed, verbose and sometimes tedious saga, that overall comes to a satisfying conclusion.

The novel spans over 50 + years, following Emma from rags-to-riches, as she basically builds an enterprise from the ground up.

The character of Emma is a strong one. She's a calloused, strong willed, business woman at her core. She doesn't allow anyone to take advantage of her or mistreat her, including the men in her life, which is a huge thing for a novel published in the seventies.

A lot of people complain about the vast amount of details and verbose language in this clunker of a book, but I actually really enjoyed the detailed descriptions when mixed with Mrs Bradford's prose. Still, it can be tedious at times. And I have to admit that although I was sad it was over, I was relieved to turn the last page and move on to something else.

This book certainly isn't for everyone, but if you enjoy long and verbose sagas, you will definitely enjoy this book.

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