

## Gone with the Wind (1939)

“Gone with the Wind” is a 1939 American epic historical romance film adapted from the 1936 novel by Margaret Mitchell. The film was set in the American South against the backdrop of the American Civil War. It tells the story of Scarlett O'Hara (Vivien Leigh), the strong-willed daughter of a Georgia plantation owner, following her romantic pursuit of Ashley Wilkes (Leslie Howard), who is married to his cousin, Melanie Hamilton (Olivia de Havilland), and her subsequent marriage to Rhett Butler (Clark Gable).

The film had a troubled production. The start of filming was delayed for two years until January 1939 because Selznick (the producer) was determined to secure Gable for the role of Rhett, and filming concluded in July 1939. 1400 women were interviewed for the role of Scarlett. Sidney Howard's original screenplay underwent many revisions to reduce it to a suitable length. Production and editing were finished in November 1939, and the film premiered in December 1939.



The film received generally positive reviews, but the length of the film received criticism. At the 12th Academy Awards, “Gone with the Wind” received 10 awards from 13 nominations, including “Best Picture”, “Best Director”, “Best Adapted Screenplay”, “Best Actress” (Vivien Leigh), and “Best Supporting Actress” (Hattie McDaniel), who was the first African American to win an Academy Award. It set a record for the total number of nominations and wins. “Gone with the Wind” became the highest-earning film and held that record for over 25 years. Adjusting for inflation, it is still the highest-earning film in cinema history. It is regarded as one of the greatest films of all time.

### The Story

In 1861, on the eve of the American Civil War, Scarlett O'Hara lives at Tara, her family's cotton plantation in Georgia, with her parents, two sisters, and their black slaves. Scarlett is deeply attracted to Ashley Wilkes and she learns that he is to be married to his cousin, Melanie Hamilton. At an engagement party the next day at Ashley's home, Twelve Oaks, a nearby plantation, Scarlett makes an advance on Ashley but is rejected; however, she catches the attention of another guest, Rhett Butler. The party is disrupted by news of President Lincoln's call for volunteers to fight the South, and the men rush to enlist. Scarlett marries Melanie's younger brother, Charles, to arouse jealousy in Ashley before he leaves to fight. Following Charles's death while serving in the Confederate States Army, Scarlett's mother sends her to the Hamilton home in Atlanta. She creates a scene by attending a charity bazaar in black clothes and waltzing with Rhett, now a blockade runner for the Confederacy.

The tide of war turns against the Confederacy after the Battle of Gettysburg. Many of the men of Scarlett's town are killed. Eight months later, as the Union Army besieges the city in the Atlanta campaign, Melanie gives birth, and Rhett helps her to escape the city. Rhett chooses to go away to fight, leaving Scarlett to make her own way back to Tara. She finds Tara deserted, except for her father, sisters, and former slaves, Mammy and Pork. Scarlett learns that her mother recently died of typhoid fever, and her father has lost his mind. With Tara pillaged by Union troops and the fields untended, Scarlett vows to ensure her and her family's survival.

With the defeat of the Confederacy, the O'Haras work hard in the cotton fields. Ashley returns but finds that he is of little help to Tara. When Scarlett begs him to run away with her, he confesses his desire for her but says he cannot leave Melanie. Scarlett's father attempts to chase away a carpetbagger from his land but is thrown from his horse and killed. Unable to pay the taxes imposed on Tara, Scarlett unsuccessfully appeals to Rhett, then tricks her younger sister's fiancé, a rich store owner called Frank Kennedy, to marry her. Frank, Ashley, Rhett, and several other accomplices make a night raid on a shanty town after Scarlett is attacked while driving through it alone, resulting in Frank's death. Shortly after Frank's funeral, Rhett proposes to Scarlett, and she accepts.

Rhett and Scarlett have a daughter who Rhett nicknames Bonnie Blue, but Scarlett still pines for Ashley and, self-conscious of her ruined body, she refuses to have any more children or share a bed with Rhett. One day at Frank's mill, Ashley's sister, India, sees Scarlett and Ashley embracing. Harboring an intense dislike of Scarlett, India eagerly spreads rumors. Later that evening, Rhett, having heard the rumors, forces Scarlett to attend Ashley's birthday party. Melanie, however, stands by Scarlett. After returning home, Scarlett finds Rhett downstairs drunk, and they argue about Ashley. Rhett kisses Scarlett against her will, stating his intent to have sex with her that night, and carries the struggling Scarlett to the bedroom.

The next day, Rhett apologizes for his behavior and offers Scarlett a divorce, which she rejects, saying it would be a disgrace. When Rhett returns from an extended trip to London, England, Scarlett informs him that she is pregnant, but an argument ensues, resulting in her falling down a flight of stairs and suffering a miscarriage. While recovering, tragedy strikes again when Bonnie dies while attempting to jump a fence with her pony. Scarlett and Rhett visit Melanie, who has suffered complications from a new pregnancy, on her deathbed. As Scarlett consoles Ashley, Rhett prepares to leave Atlanta. Having realized that it was Rhett, and not Ashley, who she truly loved the whole time, Scarlett pleads with Rhett to stay, but he rebuffs her and walks away into the morning fog. A distraught Scarlett resolves to return home to Tara, vowing to one day win Rhett back.