



## Belinda

by Maria Edgeworth (1767-1849)

When *Belinda* was published in 1801 it became both controversial and popular. Controversial because of the inter-racial marriage presented in the novel, and popular because it's a very good comedy of manners, like *Evelina* by Fanny Burney. *Belinda*, like *Evelina*, is a soft and loving girl of 17; she is coming to London with her aunt who directs her action in order to make sure that she'll find a good match. But what will happen if *Belinda* will fall in love? Will Clarence Hervey, the man she loves, be able to marry her? It seems almost impossible, as he is secretly bringing up another woman to be a perfect wife to him and now, in all honor, he thinks he must marry her. These social novels about young women trying to find good husbands were admired by Jane Austen who referred to *Belinda* in *Northanger Abbey*: "And what are you reading, Miss — ?" "Oh! It is only a novel!" replies the young lady, while she lays down her book with affected indifference, or momentary shame. 'It is only *Cecilia*, or *Camilla*, or *Belinda*; or, in short, only some work in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humour, are conveyed to the world in the best-chosen language.'

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Cover design by Kathryn Delaney  
Cover illustration from the novel



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