

## Gwethalyn Graham



Photo courtesy of [Anisfield Wolf Book Awards](#)

Gwethalyn Graham was born in 1913 and won the Governor General's Literary Award for Fiction in 1938, at the age of 25, for *Swiss Sonata*. This book went through two British editions, was published in the US and was banned in Nazi Germany. I have not read this book, but according to the [Dictionary of Literary Biography](#), it contains "a passionate argument for international co-operation."

She is remembered best for her classic work *Earth and High Heaven* (1944). This lyrical novel portrays a love story complicated by ethnic intolerance on the part of the girl's parents. This is all the more shocking since they are loving, supportive, intelligent, and intellectually progressive--until she brings home a young man from outside their ethnic community. This novel won her a second Governor General's Award and became widely known. In 1945 it won the Anisfield-Wolf Book Award, and has recently been re-issued by Cormorant Books.

A member of the intellectual community in Montreal during the thirties and forties, Graham tackled a theme that was not fashionable, holding a mirror to reflect the ethnic prejudice she witnessed around her. Her fiction was in this sense ahead of its time.

Graham also wrote for magazines, including *Chatelaine* and *Saturday Night*, where in 1938 she argued for admitting refugees into Canada. She also gave speeches and distributed petitions in support of this cause.

She did some television work as well, and in 1963, she collaborated in *Dear Enemies* with [Solange Chaput Rolland](#), a Quebec editor, publisher and political writer, as well as a radio and TV journalist. This book was written as an exchange of letters, and tackled the theme of French-English relations. It was published the same year in French as *Chers enemies*.

The courageous and talented writer Gwethalyn Graham died of brain cancer in 1965. She was just fifty-two years old.