

## **Metrowest Readers' Advisory Roundtable**

Historical Fiction - Distant Past

November 19, 2021 @9:30am

**Benchmark Title:** *The Girl with the Pearl Earring* by Tracy Chevalier

Lots of lack of communication, things unexplained

One reader watched the movie and thought the description of internal thoughts just didn't carry over to the visual format

Social rules, Griet's silence

The historical settings and rules can be tough to understand, especially when viewed through today's lens

One reader highly recommended the audio version. The narrator did a good job with the different voices.

Content seemed more modern in some ways than expected, in the way Griet thought about her situation

Romance with Griet felt forced as a backstory to the painting

Family was okay with relationship with Pieter because it meant he could feed the family - practical versus romantic relationship

Did Griet really have feelings for Vermeer or did she love art? Wasn't totally clear especially given how relationships worked in those days

One person asked the others why they like historical fiction given some of the troubling aspects of women's role in earlier societies. One answer was that there's a line in how much sexualization, violence, objectification, etc a reader can stand, and the purpose and expression of those aspects makes or breaks the book

## **Second Titles**

*Lavinia* by Ursula LeGuin

So layered, kind of hard to follow

Clever but not sure reader catches everything

World building is excellent!

Detail around war and the internal female experience also great

Well rounded

Main character not interested in romantic relationships

*Silence of the Women* by Pat Barker

Story of the Trojan War from multiple female perspectives

*The Weight of Ink* by Rachel Kadish

560 pages

Set in the 1600s

Parallel narrative with contemporary historian, which creates suspense. Found that really compelling, especially in terms of piecing together history gradually and exploring the modern perspective of history

One challenge for historical fiction is the historical accuracy, especially for someone who loves true history/non-fiction

This book has an author's note that helps clarify the line between truth and fiction

The story focuses on the experience of Portuguese Jewish people. A woman acts as a scribe for a rabbi, which is not a role usually available to women. She uses only her initials so people don't know she's female

*Sister Song* by Lucy Holland

Very recent publication

Some fantasy elements

Takes place in early 100s in Britain, beginning of the spread of Christianity

Three siblings are main characters, one is what we would call transgender today

Listed as science fiction or fantasy in some libraries