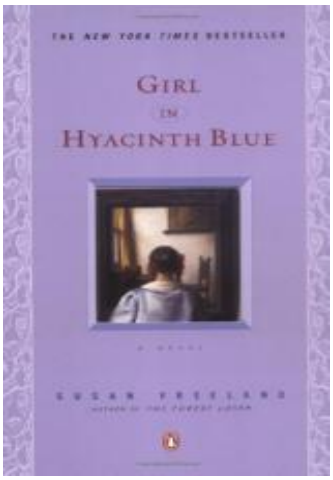
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Girl in Hyacinth Blue

by Susan Vreeland



About the Book

This luminous story begins in the present day, when a professor invites a colleague to his home to see a painting that he has kept secret for decades. The professor swears it is a Vermeer --- but why has he hidden this important work for so long? The reasons unfold in a series of events that trace the ownership of the painting back to World War II and Amsterdam, and still further back to the moment of the work's inspiration. As the painting moves through each owner's hands, what was long hidden quietly surfaces, illuminating poignant moments in multiple lives. Vreeland's characters remind us, through their love of this mysterious painting, how beauty transforms and why we reach for it, what lasts and what in our lives is singular and unforgettable.

Discussion Guide

1. What does **Girl in Hyacinth Blue** suggest about the value (personal and monetary) and function/purpose of art?
2. How does art serve us? Why do we need it?
3. Do you feel the author is focusing more on the role of art or the nature of life?
4. This painting seems to have a different effect on each of the owners. Why?
5. How does the painting function for each character? Who loves it the most?
6. Why would the author structure the novel in reverse chronology? What are the advantages/disadvantages of telling the story this way?
7. Discuss the range and significance of the last line.
8. In the end, does it matter whether or not the painting is a Vermeer? To whom does it matter and to whom is it irrelevant, and what does this say about their characters?
9. What actually happened to the painting? Does it matter that the final outcome is not shown on scene?
10. What does the book have to say about the joys and difficulties of being an artist?

11. How does the character of women and girls change through the centuries?
12. In what way does the girl in the painting reflect Hannah and Magdalena's natures?
13. In what way are Hannah and Magdalena similar? In what way are Hannah and Anne Frank similar--and different?
14. Where does the novel touch on the tragic? the triumphant?
15. Is it a novel?

Author Bio

Susan Vreeland is the internationally known author of art-related historical fiction. Four of her books are *New York Times* bestsellers.

LISETTE'S LIST presents one woman's yearning for art at a time when her family's collection of paintings had to be hidden in the south of France from Nazi art thieves. CLARA AND MR. TIFFANY reveals the talented woman who conceived of and designed the well-loved Tiffany leaded glass lamps. LUNCHEON OF THE BOATING PARTY depicts Renoir's masterpiece, the personalities involved in its making, and the *joie de vivre* of late 19th-century Paris. LIFE STUDIES is a collection of stories of Impressionist painters told by people who knew them, as well as contemporary individuals encountering art in meaningful ways. GIRL IN HYACINTH BLUE traces an alleged Vermeer painting through the centuries. THE PASSION OF ARTEMISIA illuminates Italian Baroque painter Artemisia Gentileschi. THE FOREST LOVER follows rebel British Columbia painter Emily Carr in her encounters with native peoples and cultures. WHAT LOVE SEES tells the love story of a blind couple who refuse to accept limitations.

Four of these books have been winners of the Theodor Geisel Award, the highest honor given by the San Diego Book Awards. Vreeland's novels have been translated into 26 languages, and have frequently been selected as Book Sense Picks. She was a high school English teacher in San Diego for 30 years.

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