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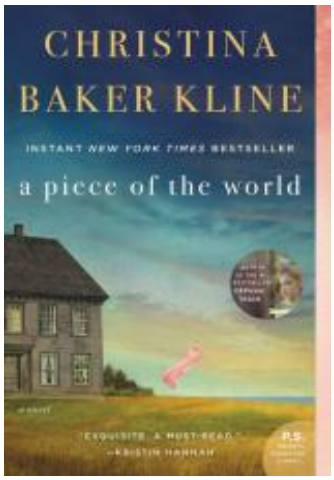
A Piece of the World

by Christina Baker Kline



About the Book

This paperback edition includes a color reproduction of Andrew Wyeth?s painting, *Christina?s World,* along with a Q&A with bestselling author Kristin Hannah and a bonus short story, ?Stranded in Ice.?

From the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of the smash bestseller ORPHAN TRAIN, a stunning and atmospheric novel of friendship, passion and art, inspired by Andrew Wyeth?s mysterious and iconic painting, *Christina?s World.*

"Later he told me that he?d been afraid to show me the painting. He thought I wouldn?t like the way he portrayed me: dragging myself across the field, fingers clutching dirt, my legs twisted behind. The arid moonscape of wheatgrass and timothy. That dilapidated house in the distance, looming up like a secret that won?t stay hidden."

To Christina Olson, the entire world is her family farm in the small coastal town of Cushing, Maine. The only daughter in a family of sons, Christina is tied to her home by health and circumstance, and seems destined for a small life. Instead, she becomes Andrew Wyeth?s first great inspiration, and the subject of one of the best-known paintings of the 20th century, *Christina?s World*.

As she did in her beloved bestseller ORPHAN TRAIN, Christina Baker Kline interweaves fact and fiction to vividly reimagine a real moment in history. A PIECE OF THE WORLD is a powerful story of the flesh-and-blood woman behind the portrait, her complicated relationship to her family and inheritance, and how artist and muse can come together to forge a new and timeless legacy.

Discussion Guide

1. Christina Olson?s life is limited by her parents, her illness, and the realities of a rural life in the first half of the 20th century. But she does make decisions that affect the course of her life. What are some of the major consequences of

Christina?s choices? Which choices did you agree with, and with which did you disagree?

2. Consider Christina?s relationship with her parents and her relationship with Mamey. What does Mamey offer Christina that her parents do not? What are the limitations of that relationship? How do Christina?s brothers have different relationships with both Mamey and their parents?

3. How do the poems of Emily Dickinson engage with the themes of this novel?

4. How might Christina?s life have been different if Walton had actually married her? What do you think their marriage might have been like?

5. What does Christina?s behavior toward her brother reveal about her character?

6. What is it about Andy that compels Christina to share her very private world with him? Why does she allow him to paint her, and why does she like being a model more than Al does?

7. What draws Andy toward Christina? How are they similar? How does Betsy?s relationship with each influence the relationship with the other?

8. Discuss the ways in which Andrew Wyeth?s iconic painting, *Christina?s World*, interacts with this story. Were you familiar with the painting before you read the novel? How did that familiarity (or lack of familiarity) color your reading of the novel?

9. Which parts of Christina?s life are probably based on biographical fact? What parts do you think the author added? Did your reading of Kline?s Author?s Note at the end of the novel change the way you thought about any aspect of the book? What about seeing the painting at the end of the novel?

10. Would you characterize Christina as an unlikeable narrator? Why or why not?

11. Is A PIECE OF THE WORLD a ?New England? novel? To what extent do the characters and the setting take into account their New England roots?

12. The majority of historical fiction revolves around important or influential figures --- monarchs, cultural beacons or warmongers. Christina, by contrast, lives a "quiet, ordinary life." How does Kline extract drama and complexity in Christina?s character?

Author Bio

A #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of 10 novels, including ORPHAN TRAIN, THE EXILES, PLEASE DON'T LIE (co-authored with Anne Burt) and THE FOURSOME, Christina Baker Kline is published in more than 40 countries. Her novels have received the New England Prize for Fiction, the Maine Literary Award, and a Barnes & Noble Discover Award, among other prizes, and have been chosen by hundreds of communities, universities and schools as ?One Book, One Read? selections. Her essays, articles and reviews have appeared in publications such as *The New York Times* and *The New York Times Book Review*

, *The Washington Post*, *The Boston Globe* and *The San Francisco Chronicle*.

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