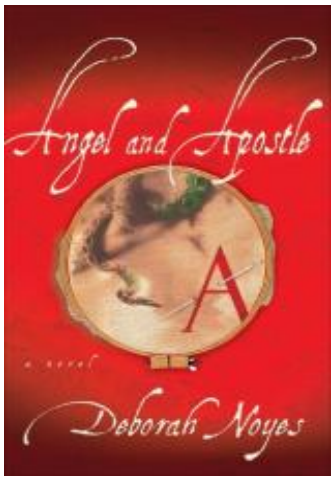
Angel And Apostle

by Deborah Noyes



About the Book

At the end of Nathaniel Hawthorne's classic novel, **The Scarlet Letter**, we know that Pearl, the elf-child daughter of Hester Prynne, is somewhere in Europe, comfortable, well set, and a mother herself now. But it could not have been easy for to arrive at such a place when she begins life as the bastard child of a woman publicly humiliated, again and again, in an unrelentingly judgmental Puritan world.

With a brilliant and authentic sense of that time and place, Deborah Noyes envisions the path Pearl takes to make herself whole and to carve her place in the New World. Beautifully written with boundless compassion, **Angel and Apostle** is a heart rending and imaginative debut in which Noyes masterfully makes Hawthorne's character her own.

Discussion Guide

1. Pearl is the narrator of this novel, and she has a very distinctive voice. She tells the tale in a language full of authentic expressions and phrases from the period in which the novel is set. Does her voice enhance or detract from your enjoyment of the story? How?

2. Religion is the predominant force in Pearl's early life, yet she responds far more deeply to nature. Only in the woods, where the other children fear to go, does she feel safe. What does her affinity with nature add to your understanding of the story?

3. Stark historical settings provide the backdrop to this story: Puritan New England, the London of Cromwell and the Restoration. How do these historical times and places shape the way characters behave?

4. Angel and Apostle examines the relationship between mothers and daughters. In what ways does Pearl's life mirror her mother's? Does she ever realize this? To what extent does she manage to transcend her mother's experiences? Will

Abigail ever manage to unpuzzle her own mother?

5. Pearl has been a friend of Simon's since childhood, and her letters show that they care deeply about one another. So why do you think she chooses to marry Nehemiah?

6. Pearl acts as Simon's eyes?yet in many ways he is far more perceptive than she. How would the story differ if told from his point of view?

7. Pearl is told many times throughout the novel that her father is the devil. To what extent does this foreshadow the truth about her father's identity?

8. Daniel Devlin gives Pearl a set of notebooks containing a "spidery, half familiar tale that was neither truth nor a lie". What motivated him to write down a version of these events? How do you think Daniel Devlin's account might differ from Pearl's?

9. The letter A is significant throughout Pearl's story. What manifestations does it take? And how does each one impact on her?

10. This novel is a reimagining or alternative telling of Nathaniel Hawthorne's classic **The Scarlet Letter**. Did this affect how you read it? If you have read the original, how does this novel differ from it? Which qualities remain the same? If you haven't read it, does it inspire you to do so?

Author Bio

Deborah Noyes writes for adults and children, and is also an editor and photographer.

Her short fiction and reviews have appeared in *Threepenny Review*, *The Boston Sunday Globe*, *Seventeen*, *Washington Post Book World*, *The Chicago Sun-Times*, *Cicada*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Bloomsbury Review*, and other publications.

Her photography has been featured in the Boston Art Commission's Public Art Walk brochure/website, The Griffin Museum of Photography, *The Sun: A Magazine of Ideas*, and several of her own books.

Deb earned a B.A. in English from the University of Massachusetts and an MFA in Writing from Vermont College. She has taught writing and literature at Emerson College and Western New England College, and was a Visiting Writer in Lesley University's MFA in Writing for Young People program.

She's a regular faculty presenter at retreats and conferences, as both author and editor, including Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI) weekends in Alaska, Arizona, Florida, Iowa, Oklahoma, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin as well as events for the Harvard Museum of Natural History, Vermont College, Big Sur Writers Workshop, the Women's National Book Association (WNBA), the Texas Book Festival, the Burlington Book Festival, the Salem Book Festival, Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA), and others.

Born in California, Deb spent her early years as a "military brat," living also in Maryland, Virginia, and Massachusetts.

Over the years she's worked all manner of day jobs to support the fiction writing habit -- from bartender and book reviewer to children's book editor and zookeeper. She's proud to report she's the only person she knows who's been bitten by a dwarf lemur.

"Jane Goodall and Dian Fossey were my idols growing up, and if I had another life to live (I imagine it often, this parallel life), I'd be a field biologist or trek around photographing invertebrates for *National Geographic*. I wanted rugged adventure, a wild and rambling, get-dirty sort of life, but for a lot of years I ended up in a fairly settled way instead, raising a family and making up stories in my pajamas. Nature and restlessness cropped up often in my writing as favorite themes though, and reading and writing continue to be the adventure of a lifetime."

Deb lives in Western Massachusetts.

Critical Praise

"While Deborah Noyes's research has imbued this story of a very contemporary-seeming young woman with the speech and the experiences of another era, Pearl resonates with feelings not bound by time or place."

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Publication Date: October 25, 2005
Genres: Fiction
Hardcover: 304 pages
Publisher: Unbridled Books
ISBN-10: 1932961100
ISBN-13: 9781932961102