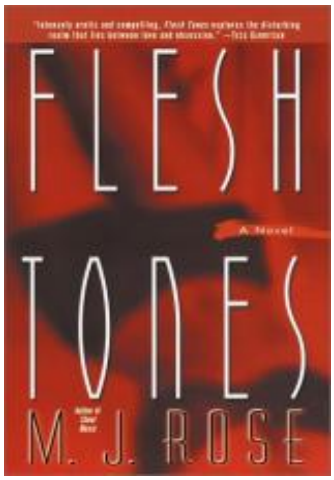
ReadingGroupGuides
The online community for reading groups

Flesh Tones

by M.J. Rose



About the Book

Genny Haviland is on trial for her life?and her love. Flash back twenty years, to a time of sexual awakening for seventeen year-old Genny. She has plunged into an affair of turbulent passion with Slade Gabriel, a man twice her age who has recently joined her father's gallery as one of its most exciting and controversial artists. During their brief time together, Gabriel etches himself into Genny's body and soul. When he discovers that she is the daughter of his patron, he ends the affair, which makes him the love and loss of her life. Two decades later, they meet again and nothing has changed: the connection, the sense of destiny, everything pulls them together until the spark turns to conflagration?.and then tragedy. Gabriel learns that his future will be not Genny, but a slow and agonizing death. He implores her to help him end his life.

Using the courtroom as the fulcrum from which the story springs, M.J. Rose weaves a tale of obsession, eroticism, and mystery. It is about a family in crisis, a woman and man whose love has been painted from a palette of vibrant and primitive colors. **Flesh Tones** asks the ultimate question: to what extremes do we go when someone we love asks for our help to die?

Discussion Guide

1. Genny says: "I'd built a life -- not admitting I'd built it on top of a shattered one. I'd learned my lesson about the kind of passion Gabriel and I had shared. No different than any narcotic, it brought both euphoria and destruction. I preferred living mid-range; no highs, no lows. And I swore that if he ever did come back to me, I'd keep my word and send him away."

How does Genny's passion fuel the book and push the story forward? How does her passion for Gabriel, mirror his passion for his art?

2. Many readers slides between thinking that, as the prosecuting attorney contends, Genny killed her lover intentionally, then, think the character is incapable of such a thing, and then back to thinking she might be guilty, after all. Did this technique work for you? At what point did you make up your mind as to whether Genny was guilty or not?

3. Flesh Tones grapples with what love is and what love requires of us. This is not the newly-married, happily-ever-after kind so common in fiction, but the all-too-real, long-term kind, full of shared history and the necessary compromises that break our hearts. How do you feel about a book that looks at this side of love? Was the author successful at painting a portrait of a doomed yet ultimately uplifting relationship?

4. Genny's mother is portrayed as a the epitome of self-control. Does this depiction belie the true woman?

5. Later in the novel, what is the significance of the Picasso that Genny chose from the gallery on her thirteenth birthday?

6. What was in Genny's background that would prepare her for a passionate affair with a man twice her age?

7. It has been said that M.J. Rose painted this novel, using a palette of only the most vivid colors. What are the may ways she uses art themes and metaphors to tell Genny's story.

8. There are several scenes, and allusions, to Genny saving Gabriel's life. Do you agree? And if so, what is the significance of this?

9. In the novel, Slade Gabriel is called "the consummate selfish artist", a man who "?pursued painting?fed on it?" Do you think he was? Did you think his talent gave him permission to be act the way he did and make the demands that he made?

10. Elizabeth Rosser, Gabriel's daughter, appears only briefly in the novel, yet her presence is a powerful one. In your opinion, what does the author intend to convey through this character?

11. Genny leaves Slade Gabriel alone to die. How can she do this and still convince anyone that she loved him?

12. There is an ethical issue at the heart of this novel - do you think Genny was right or wrong in helping Slade Gabriel to die? Do you think there is ever a good reason for the wrong thing even when it is for the right reason?

Author Bio

M.J. Rose is the *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestselling author of more than 18 novels, including THE BOOK OF LOST FRAGRANCES and CARTIER'S HOPE. Among other awards, her last 11 novels have all appeared on the Indie Next List. The Fox series "Past Lives" was based on M.J.?s novel THE REINCARNATIONIST. Her books have been translated into more than 30 languages. She is also the founder of AuthorBuzz.com and the co-founder of 1001DarkNights.com and Blue Box Press.

Critical Praise

"[A] Sexy Summer Read....One of the books that'll soon be burning up the beach."

Flesh Tones

by M.J. Rose

Publication Date: April 29, 2003
Genres: Fiction
Paperback: 320 pages
Publisher: Ballantine Books
ISBN-10: 0345451058
ISBN-13: 9780345451057