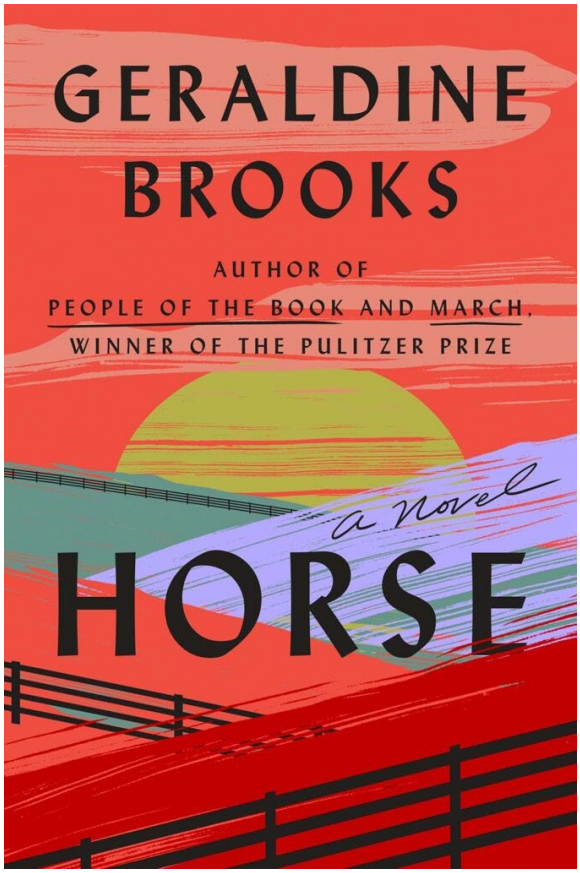
book discussion kits

Horse
by Geraldine Brooks

Martin County Library System Book Discussion Kit:

Horse by Geraldine Brooks



Included in the Kit:

- Book summary
- Author biography
- Discussion questions
- Recipe suggestions

Book summary

A discarded painting in a junk pile, a skeleton in an attic, and the greatest racehorse in American history: from these strands, a Pulitzer Prize winner braids a sweeping story of spirit, obsession, and injustice across American history.

Kentucky, 1850. An enslaved groom named Jarret and a bay foal forge a bond of understanding that will carry the horse to record-setting victories across the South. When the nation erupts in civil war, an itinerant young artist who has made his name on paintings of the racehorse takes up arms for the Union. On a perilous night, he reunites with the stallion and his groom, very far from the glamor of any racetrack.

New York City, 1954. Martha Jackson, a gallery owner celebrated for taking risks on edgy contemporary painters, becomes obsessed with a nineteenth-century equestrian oil painting of mysterious provenance.

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Washington, DC, 2019. Jess, a Smithsonian scientist from Australia, and Theo, a Nigerian-American art historian, find themselves unexpectedly connected through their shared interest in the horse—one studying the stallion's bones for clues to his power and endurance, the other uncovering the lost history of the unsung Black horsemen who were critical to his racing success.

Based on the remarkable true story of the record-breaking thoroughbred Lexington, Horse is a novel of art and science, love and obsession, and our unfinished reckoning with racism.

(Source: https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/*)*

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Meet the Author



Australian-born Geraldine Brooks is an author and journalist who grew up in the Western suburbs of Sydney, attending Bethlehem College Ashfield and the University of Sydney. She worked as a reporter for The Sydney Morning Herald for three years as a feature writer with a special interest in environmental issues.

In 1982 she won the Greg Shackleton Australian News Correspondents scholarship to the journalism master's program at Columbia University in New York City. Later she worked forThe Wall Street Journal, where she covered crises in the the Middle East, Africa, and the Balkans. In 1990, with her husband Tony Horwitz, she won the Overseas Press Club Award for best coverage of the Gulf War. The following year they received a citation for excellence for their series, "War and Peace." In 2006 she was a fellow at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Studies at Harvard University. She returned to Harvard as a Visiting Lecturer in 2021.

She was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in fiction in 2006 for her novel March. Her novels People of the Book, Caleb's Crossing and The Secret Chord all were New York Times Bestsellers. Her first novel, Year of Wonders is an an international bestseller, translated into more than 25 languages and currently optioned for a limited series by Olivia Coleman's production company. She is also the author of the nonfiction works Nine Parts of Desire, Foreign Correspondence and The Idea of Home.

Brooks married fellow journalist and author Tony Horwitz in Tourette-sur-Loup France in 1984 and were together until his sudden death in 2019. They have two sons, Nathaniel and Bizu, She now lives with a dog named Bear and a mare named Valentine by an old mill pond on Martha's Vineyard and spends as much time as she can in Australia. In 2016, she was named an Officer in the Order of Australia.

(Source: https://geraldinebrooks.com/*)*

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Discussion Questions

1. On page 28 (Theo, Georgetown, Washington, DC, 2019), Theo reflects that depictions of horses are among the oldest art humans created. The book's epigraphs reflect on the significance of Lexington—in his day, an even bigger celebrity than Seabiscuit or Secretariat. Discuss the enduring human fascination with horses—do they move you more than other animals, and if so, why?
2. Theo and Jess are both obsessed with their rarefied fields of expertise. Does the author manage to convey why these unusual careers can be so compelling? If so, how?
3. Jarret's connection with horses is presented as stronger than his bonds with people. How does his love for and dedication to Lexington help or hamper his coming of age and his transformation over the course of the novel?
4. Horseracing in the mid-nineteenth century was very different to its modern iteration. What surprised you? Do you think horseracing today takes adequate care for the wellbeing of equines?
5. On p. 71 (Thomas J. Scott, The Meadows, Lexington, Kentucky, 1852), Scott writes, "[We] who think we are above enslaving our fellow man are corrupted. Only show us absolute agency over the apt and the willing, and suddenly we find the planters' obduracy that much less odious. I must guard against the rank seductions of this place." How does the author draw out the similarities and differences between Northern and Southern attitudes in this era through Thomas J. Scott, a practiced observer who moves between the regions?

6. Several historical figures appear in the novel, among them the emancipationist newspaper publisher Cassius Clay and his daughter, the suffragist Mary Barr Clay. What are Cassius Clay's arguments for emancipation to the Warfield family? Do you see the roots of what would become Mary Barr Clay's passion for the women's suffrage movement in the way she is portrayed in her youth? What are their respective strengths and limitations? How do novels make historical figures come alive for us beyond what we might find in a work of nonfiction?
7. Martha Jackson was a real American gallery owner and art collector. Discuss her portrayal in Horse and what her relationship to the painting of Lexington conveys about her character. What does her storyline contribute to the novel's themes? What did her chapters reveal to you about America in that era, and did you notice any similarities between the art world of the mid-20th century and the horseracing economy of a century prior?
8. Referring to the Civil War on p. 87 (Jess, Smithsonian Museum of Natural History, Washington, DC, 2019), Jess says, "Not my war […] Unless you call Australia the very Deep South." Theo is also not American. Nevertheless, they're both forced to reckon with the legacy of slavery—particularly Theo, who encounters racism in his daily life. How does this affect their relationship? What does the novel reveal about the way history shapes our present moment?
9. Discuss Theo and Jess's relationship. What do you think attracts them to one another despite their differences? What do they learn from each other?

10. Examine Jess's conversation with Daniel in the aftermath of what happens to Theo at the end of the novel. What did you make of Daniel's assessment of the situation? Do you share his point of view?

(Source: https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/)

Recipes

No-Bake Horse Cookies

Ingredients:

- 12 Milano cookies
- 12 mini Nilla wafers
- 3 strands rope licorice
- 1 small Tootsie Roll
- Black food coloring pen or black frosting with writing tip
- 24 candy eyes
- brown/white frosting with a star tip
- Toothpick



Directions:

Establish a work space and pipe out a tablespoon or two of brown/white frosting the upper corner along with a toothpick to use of application. Draw a smiley face using the food coloring pen onto all 12 mini Nilla Wafers. Using a small dab of frosting, attach mini Nilla wafer to the bottom, following the curve, of your Milano cookie.

Cut licorice ropes into 3-4 inch pieces, carefully wrap around your cookie midway, attaching on the back witha dab of frosting and trim the ends. Using kitchen shears, cut your Tootsie Roll into thin pieces and then again until your get a piece small enough to form a triangular ear. Roll between your fingers should do the trick. Attach to the other end of your Milano cookie using a small dab of frosting. In the center, pipe out a tuft of hair using the star tip. Lastly, add candy eyes. Allow frosting to set and serve!

(Source: https://www.savoryexperiments.com/no-bake-horse-cookies/#wprm-recipe-container-18685*)*

Recipes Continuation

Mint Julep Mocktail



Ingredients:

For the Mint Syrup:

- 1 cup water
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 cup mint

For the julep mocktail:

- 1 cup ginger ale or non-alcoholic bourbon
- Crushed ice
- Mint sprigs to garnish (optional)

Directions:

To make the mint syrup, combine sugar and water in a small saucepan over medium heat. Stir until the sugar dissolves. Add mint and increase the heat until the mixture comes to a gentle boil, stirring occasionally.

Reduce heat to low, replace the lid and simmer for 10 minutes. Remove from the heat and leave covered until the mixture cools (the longer you leave it, the stronger the mint flavor will be). Leave to cool, then strain.

Fill your cups with crushed ice. Add ½ cup of ginger ale or non-alcoholic bourbon to each cup, then ¼ cup of mint syrup. Stir gently and garnish with a mint sprig.

(Source: https://mindfulmocktail.com/mint-julep-mocktail/)