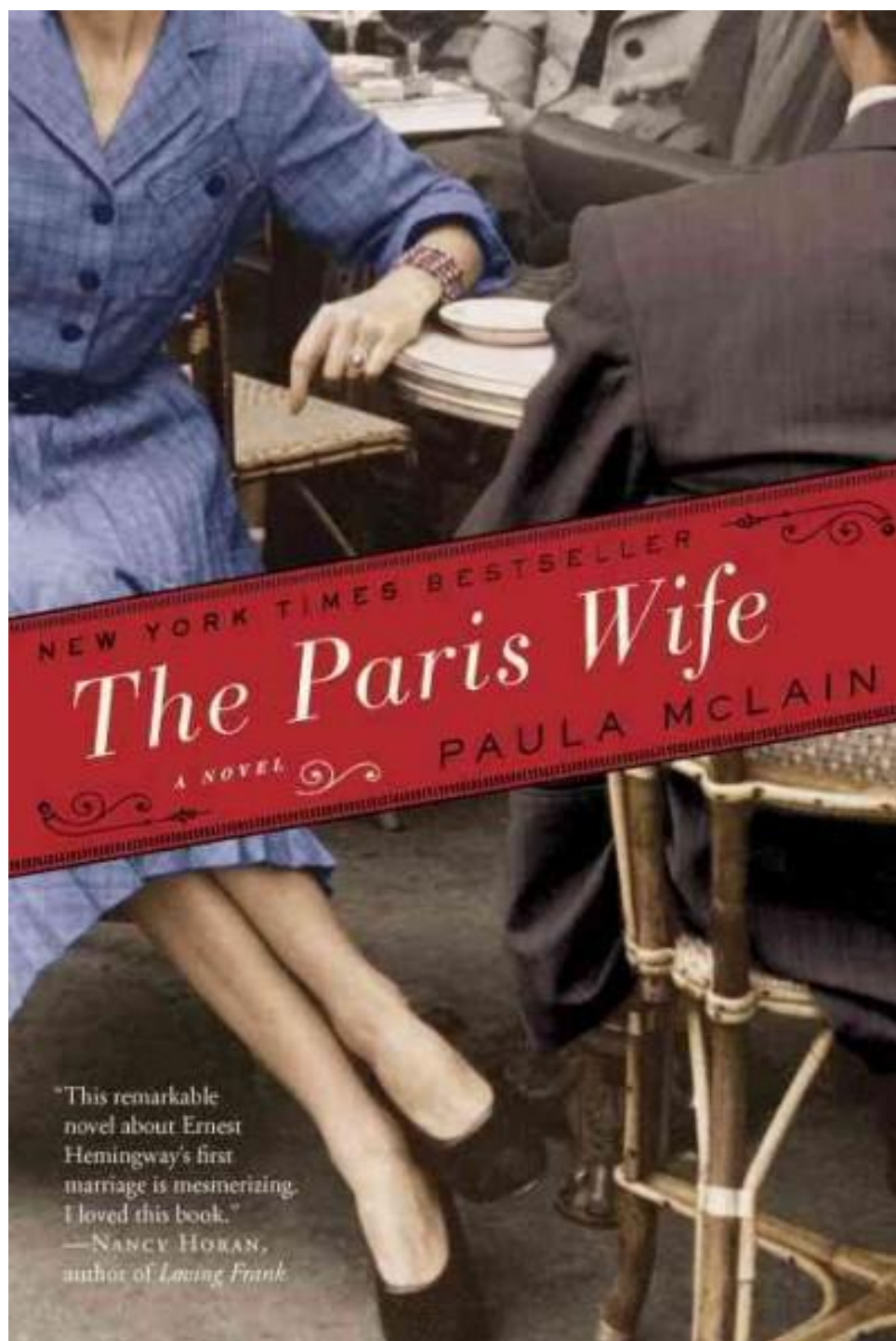


About the book...



A deeply evocative story of ambition and betrayal, *The Paris Wife* captures a remarkable period of time—Paris in the twenties—and an extraordinary love affair between two unforgettable people: Ernest Hemingway and his wife Hadley.

In Chicago in 1920, Hadley Richardson is a quiet twenty-eight-year-old who has all but given up on love and happiness—until she meets Ernest Hemingway and finds herself captivated by his good looks, intensity, and passionate desire to write. Following a whirlwind courtship and wedding, the pair set sail for Paris, where they become the golden couple in a lively and volatile group of expatriates that includes Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound, and F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald.

But the hard-drinking and fast-living café life does not celebrate traditional notions of family and monogamy. As Hadley struggles with jealousy and self-doubt and Ernest wrestles with his burgeoning writing career, they must confront a deception that could prove the undoing of one of the great romances in literary history.

About the author...



Paula McLain received an MFA in poetry from the University of Michigan and has been a resident of Yaddo and the MacDowell Colony. She is

the author of two collections of poetry, as well as a memoir, *Like Family*, and a first novel, *A Ticket to Ride*. She lives in Cleveland with her family.

PAULA McLAIN ON FACT vs. FICTION IN THE PARIS WIFE (<http://www.randomhouse.com/>)

In Ernest Hemingway's introduction to his memoir, *A Moveable Feast*, he writes, "If the reader prefers, this book may be regarded as fiction. But there is always the chance that such a book of fiction may throw some light on what has been written as fact." I'm hoping my novel will work to illuminate not just the facts of Ernest and Hadley's years in Paris, but the essence of that time and of their profound connection by weaving both the fully imagined and undeniably real.

When I began to research my book, beginning with biographies of Hemingway and Hadley, and with their delicious correspondence, I knew the actual story of the Hemingway's marriage was near perfect; it was a ready-made novel, ripe for the picking. I didn't have to invent a plot for them, nor did I want to. My work would be to use the framework of historical documentation to push into these characters' hearts and minds, discovering their motivations, their deepest wishes.

The most important step for me was getting Hadley's voice. She has very little dialogue in *A Moveable Feast*, but what's there is so evocative. It led me to seek out the letters she wrote to Ernest during their courtship, and that's when I knew I could write the book. Her speech rhythms, her intelligence and charm and sense of humor all come through with clarity and effervescence. I simply fell in love with her, with them both.

Beginning to truly hear a character's voice is like finding a piece of magic string. It pulls you inside their consciousness, and helps you see the world through their very particular point of view, unfolding the story only they can tell. That's ultimately why I chose to write a few select passages from Ernest's perspective. There were things I simply needed to know about the choices he was making, and could only know those

things from the inside out. He's terribly complex. Parts of their story aren't easy to understand—and yet I needed to understand them if I was going to fully inhabit the world that needed inventing: the *interior* one. In many of Hemingway's biographies, Hadley is quickly dispatched as "the first wife," a youthful experiment gone awry. Their emotional crisis—that terrible spring and summer when Hadley learns she's been betrayed—occupies only a few taut pages in one well-regarded biography, but is the crux of my story. I invented what I couldn't know—all of their dialogue, for instance—but knew, in a deeper way, one that can't be aided by all the biographies in the world, what lay at the heart of what I was imagining.

Paris in the 20's was such a singular time in history, and the Hemingways' years there were so full of spectacular adventure and compelling encounters, that I felt entirely grateful to live it with them. Working on this book was hands down the most fun I've ever had as a writer. I'll never forget it.

HEMINGWAY TRIVIA

In 1898, Ernest's father, a physician, had to step in and deliver his own first child, Marcelline, when the doctor on hand for the home birth suffered a heart attack in the middle of the delivery. Dr. Hemingway rushed home in a snowstorm to administer first aid to the doctor, attend to his wife's anesthetic, and perform

a very difficult high-forceps delivery. Apparently Grace wasn't inordinately traumatized by the ordeal. Ernest was born eighteen months later.

Hemingway was born nearly blind in his left eye. This defect kept him from enlisting in the army; he volunteered for the Red Cross as an ambulance driver instead.

Ernest was notoriously accident-prone. In his lifetime, he suffered no fewer than ten concussions for various reasons—trench mortar, auto accidents, plane crashes, jumping from a motorcycle into a ditch. Some of his mishaps had comic elements, like pulling a skylight down on his head, or dropkicking a mirror, or shooting himself in the legs while gaffing a shark, or being clawed while playing with a lion. Some were quite terrible. Following two successive plane crashes in Africa in 1954, he was even presumed dead. In his biography of Hemingway, Jeffrey Meyer lists the various injuries sustained: "His skull was fractured, two discs of his spine were cracked, his right arm and shoulder were dislocated, his liver, right kidney and spleen were ruptured, his sphincter muscle was paralyzed by compressed vertebrae on the iliac nerve, his arms, face and head were burned by the flames of the plane, his vision and hearing were impaired..." Days later, Hemingway was amused to read his obituary in a café in Venice. Nevertheless, the injuries

continued to plague him and probably shortened his life considerably. Jack told Denis Brian, one of Hemingway's biographers, that his father was never the same person afterwards.

*Sara and Gerald Murphy were the real-life models for the tragic Dick and Nicole Diver in Fitzgerald's **Tender is the Night**. Nicole Diver wears a long string of pearls down her back with a bathing suit on the beach at Antibes. So did Sara Murphy.*

Three of Hemingway's four wives were from St. Louis. Hadley and Martha Gelhorn both attended Mary Institute. Also, Martha Gelhorn's father was Hadley's family gynecologist. Hadley went to see him not long after she and Ernest began courting, because she wanted to be reassured she could have children.

Hadley was the only one of Ernest's wives who wasn't a journalist.

Not long before Mary Welsh became Hemingway's fourth wife, she worked for the Chicago Daily News, where Paul Mowrer, Hadley's second husband was then the managing editor. In Mary's memoir, How it Was, she remembers several cocktail parties at the Mowrer's apartment, though it never came up that Hadley was the first Mrs. Hemingway.

When Hadley and her second husband, Paul Mowrer were living in Paris in 1948, they met and befriended Julia Child, whose husband Paul Child had first become acquainted with Hadley and Ernest in the 20's, in Paris.

In 1944, Jack Hemingway (Bumby) served the OSS in World War II. While on reconnaissance was wounded behind enemy lines, he was wounded and apprehended by Nazi German troops. The officer in charge of his interrogation was an Austrian who, when he heard Jack's full name, asked him if he'd ever visited Schruns. As it so happens, the officer's girlfriend was no other than Bumby's nanny Tiddy! The officer ended the interrogation and sent him to a hospital for treatment. From there, Jack became a prisoner of war while his parents worried for him profusely. He was released unharmed six months later.

Reviews

Booklist

History is sadly neglectful of the supporting players in the lives of great artists. Fortunately, fiction provides ample opportunity to bring these often fascinating personalities out into the limelight. Gaynor Arnold successfully resurrected the much-maligned Mrs. Charles Dickens in *Girl in a Blue Dress* (2009), now Paula McLain brings Hadley Richardson Hemingway out

from the formidable shadow cast by her famous husband. Though doomed, the Hemingway marriage had its giddy high points, including a whirlwind courtship and a few fast and furious years of the expatriate lifestyle in 1920s Paris. Hadley and Ernest traveled in heady company during this gin-soaked and jazz-infused time, and readers are treated to intimate glimpses of many of the literary giants of the era, including Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound, James Joyce, and F. Scott Fitzgerald. But the real star of the story is Hadley, as this time around, Ernest is firmly relegated to the background as he almost never was during their years together. Though eventually a woman scorned, Hadley is able to acknowledge without rancor or bitterness that "Hem" had "helped me to see what I really was and what I could do." Much more than a "woman-behind-the-man" homage, this beautifully crafted tale is an unsentimental tribute to a woman who acted with grace and strength as her marriage crumbled.

Library Journal /*Starred Review*/

A young Miss Hadley Richardson, with high spirits and lovely auburn hair, meets a handsome aspiring writer named Ernest Hemingway. They marry and make their way to Paris, living in a squalid apartment and spending time in café society with fellow expatriates Gertrude Stein, Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald, Ezra

Pound, and Sylvia Beach. Though the post-World War I years offer a great deal of creative freedom for these idle Americans, self-indulgence is the code of the day. Will Hadley choose to step aside as literary success—and another woman—come to take their place in Ernest's life? In her second novel (following *A Ticket To Ride*), McLain creates a compelling, spellbinding portrait of a marriage. Hemingway is a magnetic figure whose charm is tempered by his dark, self-destructive tendencies. Hadley is strong and smart, but she questions herself at every turn. Women of all ages and situations will sympathize as they follow this seemingly charmed union to its inevitable demise. VERDICT Colorful details of the expat life in Jazz Age Paris, combined with the evocative story of the Hemingways' romance, result in a compelling story that will undoubtedly establish McLain as a writer of substance. Highly recommended for all readers of popular fiction.

Kirkus Reviews/**Starred Review**/

An imaginative, elegantly written look inside the marriage of Ernest Hemingway and Hadley Richardson.

Hadley, literary history tells us, was Hemingway's rescuing angel; eight years older than he, she was the

woman who lifted him from his postwar depression as a wounded veteran and helped restore his battered confidence. He, of course, was smitten; she was too, charmed by "his grin, elastic and devastating." "To keep you from thinking," McLain's (*A Ticket to Ride*, 2008, etc.) narrator puts it, "there was liquor, an ocean's worth at least, all the usual vices and plenty of rope to hang yourself with. But some of us, a very few in the end, bet on marriage against the odds." Marriage it was, and from there McLain's story becomes one of battling those long odds. After a sojourn in Toronto, the two head off to Paris—whence the title—at novelist Sherwood Anderson's suggestion, not just to take advantage of the favorable exchange rate but also to plunge headlong into the most active literary scene on the planet. By McLain's account, true to history, Hadley at times verges a touch on the naive but, for the most part, is tough and sophisticated; she holds her own with Ezra Pound ("He's very noisy...but he has some fine ideas") and Gertrude Stein, hangs tough with the bulls in Pamplona, and keeps up with Hemingway when he was young and vigorous and had not yet settled into his boozy "Papa" persona. McLain's Hemingway is outwardly a touch less obdurate than even Hemingway's own depiction of himself, especially at the climactic moment in which his manuscripts go missing, in which McLain puts a slight twist on history; clearly it marks the beginning of the end, whereupon the tale takes on the contour of a Jill Clayburgh

vehicle. The closing pages, in particular, are both evocative and moving, taking in the sweep of events over a third of a century and providing a resolution that, if not neat, is wholly in character.

A pleasure to read—and a pleasure to see Hadley Richardson presented in a sympathetic light.

BookPage Reviews

Paris is not for lovers

Paula McLain's fictionalized study of the starter marriage of Hadley Richardson and Ernest Hemingway, **The Paris Wife**, is a pleasure for anyone who wonders what it was like to be a broke, ambitious writer in Europe in the 1920s. Or, more specifically, a broke, ambitious writer's wife.

Hadley meets Ernest at a friend's house in Chicago. She's in her late 20s, nearly a decade older than he is, and on the verge of permanent spinsterhood. He deflowers her, they marry and flee to Paris, where they can live cheaply and meet all manner of big shots, including Gertrude Stein and Ezra Pound. They have a baby, nicknamed Bumby. There's some drinking, though Hadley doesn't hit the sauce nearly as much as

Ernest. In McLain's hands, he's nicer than one would think, and the word that comes to mind for Hadley is "earnest" as she struggles to make homes for them in dinky little rooms while Hem tries to make a living. In clear and unfussy prose, McLain makes the reader long for their Lost Generational squalor.

Indeed, McLain's talent is such that the fact that few of the characters are likable doesn't mar her story. Characters need only be interesting, and well-drawn creeps are the most interesting of them all. Exceptions to the overall badness are the Murphys, the rich, cosmopolitan and compassionate couple who adopt both the Hemingways and the F. Scott Fitzgeralds like some folks adopt ugly pound puppies, and of course Bumby, still a child when his parents' marriage detonates. Even Hadley repels with her love of bullfighting—a woman who gets her kicks from watching an animal tortured to death is simply not someone one can like. When the appalling Pauline Pfeiffer, who will become Ernest's second wife, crawls into bed with them one drowsy Mediterranean afternoon one doesn't know whether to cheer or gag. Hadley, like so many of her revered matadors, ends up pretty badly gored, but survives, and lives well into her 80s.

Restrained, perceptive and a bit sad, *The Paris Wife* is a look at a time and a marriage that weren't as glamorous and carefree as we'd like to believe.

Publishers Weekly

McLain (*A Ticket to Ride*) offers a vivid addition to the complex-woman-behind-the-legendary-man genre, bringing Ernest Hemingway and his first wife, Hadley Richardson, to life. Meeting through mutual friends in Chicago, Hadley is intrigued by the brash "beautiful boy," and after a brief courtship and small wedding, Hadley and Ernest take off for Paris, "the place to be," according to Sherwood Anderson. McLain ably portrays the cultural icons of the 1920s—Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas, Zelda and Scott Fitzgerald, and Ezra and Dorothy Pound—and the impact they have on the then unknown Hemingway, casting Hadley as a rock of Gibraltar for a troubled man whose brilliance and talent were charged and compromised by his astounding capacity for alcohol and women. Hadley, meanwhile, makes a convincing transformation from an overprotected child to a game and brave young woman who puts up with impoverished living conditions and shattering loneliness to prop up her husband's career. The historical figure cameos sometimes come across as gimmicky, but the heart of the story—Ernest and Hadley's relationship—gets an honest reckoning, most

notably the waves of elation and despair that pull them apart.

Discussion questions

(<http://www.randomhouse.com>)

1. In many ways, Hadley's girlhood in St. Louis was a difficult and repressive experience. How do her early years prepare her to meet and fall in love with Ernest? What does life with Ernest offer her that she hasn't encountered before? What are the risks?
2. Hadley and Ernest don't get a lot of encouragement from their friends and family when they decided to marry. What seems to draw the two together? What are some of the strengths of their initial attraction and partnership? The challenges?
3. The Ernest Hemingway we meet in *The Paris Wife* — through Hadley's eyes—is in many ways different from the ways we imagine him when faced with the largeness of his later persona. What do you see as his character strengths? Can you see what Hadley saw in him?
4. The Hemingways spontaneously opt for Paris over Rome when they get key advice from Sherwood Anderson. What was life like for them when they first

arrived? How did Hadley's initial feelings about Paris differ from Ernest's and why?

5. Throughout *THE PARIS WIFE*, Hadley refers to herself as "Victorian" as opposed to "modern." What are some of the ways she doesn't feel like she fits into life in bohemian Paris? How does this impact her relationship with Ernest? Her self-esteem? What are some of the ways Hadley's "old-fashioned" quality can be seen as a strength and not a weakness?
6. Hadley and Ernest's marriage survived for many years in Jazz-Age Paris, an environment that had very little patience for monogamy and other traditional values. What in their relationship seems to sustain them? How does their marriage differ from those around them? Pound's and Shakespeare's? Scott and Zelda's?
7. Most of *THE PARIS WIFE* is written in Hadley's voice, but a few select passages come to us from Ernest's point of view. What impact does getting Ernest's perspective have on our understanding of their marriage? How does it affect your ability to understand him and his motivations in general?
8. What was the role of literary spouses in 1920's Paris? How is Hadley challenged and restricted by her gender? Would those restrictions have changed if she had been an artist and not merely a "wife"?

9. At one point, Ezra Pound warns Hadley that it would be a dire mistake to let parenthood change Ernest. Is there a nugget of truth behind his concern? What are some of the ways Ernest is changed by Bumby's birth? What about Hadley? What does motherhood bring to her life, for better or worse?
10. One of the most wrenching scenes in the book is when Hadley loses a valise containing all of Ernest's work to date. What kind of turning point does this mark for the Hemingway's marriage? Do you think Ernest ever forgives her?
11. When the couple moves to Toronto to have Bumby, Ernest tries his best to stick it out with a regular "nine-to-five" reporter's job, and yet he ultimately finds this impossible. Why is life in Toronto so difficult for Ernest? Why does Hadley agree to go back to Paris earlier than they planned, even though she doesn't know how they'll make it financially? How does she benefit from supporting his decision to make a go at writing only fiction?
12. Hadley and Ernest had similar upbringings in many ways. What are the parallels, and how do these affect the choices Hadley makes as a wife and mother?
13. In *THE PARIS WIFE*, when Ernest receives his contract for *In Our Time*, Hadley says, "He would never again be unknown. We would never again be

this happy." How did fame affect Ernest and his relationship with Hadley?

14. *The Sun Also Rises* is drawn from the Hemingways' real-life experiences with bullfighting in Spain. Ernest and his friends are clearly present in the book, but Hadley is not. Why? In what ways do you think Hadley is instrumental to the book regardless, and to Ernest's career in general?
15. How does the time and place—Paris in the 20's— affect Ernest and Hadley's marriage? What impact does the war, for instance, have on the choices and behavior of the expatriate artists surrounding the Hemingways? Do you see Ernest changing in response to the world around him? How, and how does Hadley feel about those changes?
16. What was the nature of the relationship between Hadley and Pauline Pfeiffer? Were they legitimately friends? How do you see Pauline taking advantage of her intimate position in the Hemingway's life? Do you think Hadley is naïve for not suspecting Pauline of having designs on Ernest earlier? Why or why not?
17. It seems as if Ernest tries to make his marriage work even after Pauline arrives on the scene. What would Hadley it have cost Hadley to stick it out with Ernest no matter what? Is there a way she could have fought harder for her marriage?

18. In many ways, Hadley is a very different person at the end of the novel than the girl who encounters Ernest by chance at a party. How do you understand her trajectory and transformation? Are there any ways she essentially doesn't change?
19. When Hemingway's biographer Carlos Baker interviewed Hadley Richardson near the end of her life, he expected her to be bitter, and yet she persisted in describing Ernest as a "prince." How can she have continued to love and admire him after the way he hurt her?
20. Ernest Hemingway spent the last months of his life tenderly reliving his first marriage in the pages his memoir, *A Moveable Feast*. In fact, it was the last thing he wrote before his death. Do you think he realized what he'd truly lost with Hadley?

Readalikes (*Books & Authors*)

Loving Frank by Nancy Horan

Fact and fiction blend in a historical novel that chronicles the relationship between seminal architect Frank Lloyd Wright and Mamah Cheney, from their meeting, when they were each married to another, to the clandestine affair that shocked Chicago society.

The Women by T. Coraghessan Boyle

Recounts the life of Frank Lloyd Wright as told through the experiences of the four women who loved him: the Montenegrin beauty Olgivanna Milanoff; the passionate Southern belle Maud Miriam Noel; the spirited Mamah Cheney, tragically killed; and his young first wife, Kitty Tobin.

Clara and Mr. Tiffany by Susan Vreeland

A fictionalized version of the life of the woman who crafted the first Tiffany glass lamp. Clara Driscoll toils in the workshop of famed artisan Louis Comfort Tiffany while dealing with the ups and downs of her love life. She finds an outlet in the creative work of Tiffany's studio, where she makes the colorful lamp that would become the trademark of Tiffany glass. Meanwhile, she gains a powerful awareness of the plight of the working class, becoming a hero to the women who work for her

French Lessons by Ellen Sussman

The story of three Americans touring Paris, France - Josie, a teacher, has recently ended a relationship and hopes that a trip to the world's most romantic city will help mend her shattered heart. Riley, an expatriate

living with a native Frenchman, hopes that a tour of the city will help her feel closer to her new homeland. Jeremy, the husband of a famous actress, feels disconnected from his wife's life of glamor and glitz and longs to find his place in her world. As they embark on a tour of the City of Light with their own tour guide, they also embark on adventures of self-discovery that could change their lives forever.

The Great Man by Kate Christensen

During his career, New York artist Oscar Feldman eschewed the abstract styles of his contemporary American painters to paint one thing and one thing only--the nude female form. Following his death, it becomes clear to his widow Abigail that Oscar's fascination with women went far beyond the canvas. Competing biographers Henry Burke and Ralph Washington descend upon Oscar's circle of friends and family to conduct interviews, and wind up discovering more than they bargained for in the three dynamic women behind the great man. Quickly they uncover the truth of Oscar's forty-year secret life with mistress Teddy St. Cloud, including the twin daughters the two had together. Oscar's sister Maxine, also an abstract painter obsessed with the feminine form, allows her masked jealousy and resentment over her brother's fame to surface. Abigail, unable to stir from her Manhattan apartment, remains stoic and inert, gamely

clinging to an insulated, Pollyanna-like view of her late husband. It is in the revelations of these three women, and in the devastating secret left prominently displayed for all to see, that final judgment will be passed on Oscar Feldman whether or not he was, indeed, a great man.

Mrs. Nixon: A Novelist Imagines a Life by Ann Beattie
Mrs. Nixon is the fictionalized biography of the former First Lady of the United States and a guide to writing fiction from award-winning author Ann Beattie. Pat Nixon, wife of impeached President Richard Nixon, is the only First Lady in recent history to exit the White House and never write a personal memoir. Beattie imagines the life and perspective of this often overlooked woman in *Mrs. Nixon*. Basing her research on Nixon's own interviews with *Life* magazine, as well as accounts from her daughter and her husband's doctor, Beattie recreates several key moments in the First Lady's life and Nixon's presidency to gain perspective on her viewpoint and attitudes. The book also offers a writer's insight into the art of writing and crafting fiction.

Rules of Civility by Amor Towles

A dramatic historical novel from debut author Amor Towles. In 1938, 25-year old Katy Kontent and her

best friend, Evelyn Ross, leave behind their small town for the bright lights of New York City. A chance meeting with a wealthy and handsome banker has Katy reconsidering her station in life. Eager for more of what life has to offer, Katy begins desperately trying to work her way up the social ladder. She leaves behind her secretarial job in search of a more promising career among Manhattan's elite, but as Katy infiltrates the top tier of New York's high society, she gets a firsthand glimpse at the manipulation, insecurity, and treachery that often guides the wealthy.

Further Reading

One Last Glimpse by James Aldridge

Kit Quayle, an aspiring Australian writer, is employed as a driver by Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald on a motor tour through Brittany. The trip is a wild ride as two huge and damaged egos clash, testing the limits of their friendship.

The Paris Pilgrims by Clarence Lawson Clancy

Mixing biography with invention, this documentary novel recreates the 20-month period in the early 1920s when a young Ernest Hemingway and his first wife, Hadley Richardson, arrive in Paris to launch his literary career. The Lost Generation and the expatriate

literary circle are intimately presented with an emphasis on the often boorish, eccentric, and sexual excess of such actual figures as Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound, Sylvia Beach, and James Joyce. Given all the deviant behavior exhibited here, it is a wonder anyone ever wrote anything.



Ann Arbor District Library