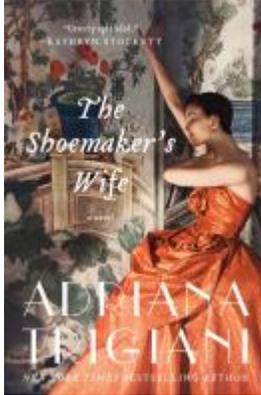


Oliver Wolcott Library
The Shoemaker's Wife by Adriana Trigiani
Book Discussion Guide
Prepared by Patricia Moore



About the Book:

The majestic and haunting beauty of the Italian Alps is the setting of the first meeting of Enza, a practical beauty, and Ciro, a strapping mountain boy, who meet as teenagers, despite growing up in villages just a few miles apart. At the turn of the last century, when Ciro catches the local priest in a scandal, he is banished from his village and sent to hide in America as an apprentice to a shoemaker in Little Italy. Without explanation, he leaves a bereft Enza behind. Soon, Enza's family faces disaster and she, too, is forced to go to America with her father to secure their future.

Unbeknownst to one another, they both build fledgling lives in America, Ciro masters shoemaking and Enza takes a factory job in Hoboken until fate intervenes and reunites them. But it is too late: Ciro has volunteered to serve in World War I and Enza, determined to forge a life without him, begins her impressive career as a seamstress at the Metropolitan Opera House that will sweep her into the glamorous salons of Manhattan and into the life of the international singing sensation, Enrico Caruso.

From the stately mansions of Carnegie Hill, to the cobblestone streets of Little Italy, over the perilous cliffs of northern Italy, to the white-capped lakes of northern Minnesota, these star-crossed lovers meet and separate, until, finally, the power of their love changes both of their lives forever.

Lush and evocative, told in tantalizing detail and enriched with lovable, unforgettable characters, *The Shoemaker's Wife* is a portrait of the times, the places and the people who defined the immigrant experience, claiming their portion of the American dream with ambition and resolve, cutting it to fit their needs like the finest Italian silk.

This riveting historical epic of love and family, war and loss, risk and destiny is the novel Adriana Trigiani was born to write, one inspired by her own family history and the love of tradition that has propelled her body of bestselling novels to international acclaim. Like *Lucia, Lucia*, *The Shoemaker's Wife* defines an era with clarity and splendor, with operatic scope and a vivid cast of characters who will live on in the imaginations of readers for years to come.

Source: ReadingGroupGuides.com

About the Author:

Adriana Trigiani is an award-winning playwright, television writer, and documentary filmmaker. The author of the bestselling Big Stone Gap series, *Very Valentine*; *Brava, Valentine*; *Lucia, Lucia*; *The Queen of the Big Time*; and *Rococo*, she has also written the best-selling memoir *Don't Sing at the Table* as well as the young adult novels *Viola in Reel Life* and *Viola in the Spotlight*. Her books have been published in 36 countries around the world. She has written and will direct the big screen version of her first novel, *Big Stone Gap*. She lives in New York City with her husband and daughter.

Source: ReadingGroupGuides.com

Book Reviews:

"Within the pages of this novel, Trigiani's 10th, is a gloriously romantic yet sensible world that seamlessly blends practicality and beauty...built around the staggering cultural and social changes the war years swept in.... Trigiani's very best...exquisite writing and a story enriched by the power of abiding love." — *USA Today*

"I've always loved reading Adriana Trigiani, but *The Shoemaker's Wife* is something totally new and completely wonderful: a rich, sweeping epic which tells the story of the women and men who built America dream by dream. I don't know how Adriana goes into her family's attic and emerges with these amazing stories, I'm just happy she does. If you're meeting her work for the first time, get ready for a lifelong love affair. *The Shoemaker's Wife* is utterly splendid." — *Kathryn Stockett, #1 New York Times bestselling author of The Help*

"The novel is a sweeping epic, but at its heart, it's a love story. It speaks to an era of possibilities." — *Providence Journal*

"Trigiani's page-turning newest... is a sweeping saga... More than an epic romance, Trigiani's work pays homage to the tribulations of the immigrant experience, and the love that makes the journey and hardships worthwhile." — *Publishers Weekly*

Further Reading:

Away: A Novel by Amy Bloom

Panoramic in scope, *Away* is the epic and intimate story of young Lillian Leyb, a dangerous innocent, an accidental heroine. When her family is destroyed in a Russian pogrom, Lillian comes to America alone, determined to make her way in a new land. When word comes that her daughter, Sophie, might still be alive, Lillian embarks on an odyssey that takes her from the world of the Yiddish theater on New York's Lower East Side, to Seattle's Jazz District, and up to Alaska, along the fabled Telegraph Trail toward Siberia.

The Sandcastle Girls by Chris Bohjalian

When Elizabeth Endicott arrives in Aleppo, Syria, she has a diploma from Mount Holyoke, a crash course in nursing, and only the most basic grasp of the Armenian language. It's 1915, and Elizabeth has volunteered to help deliver food and medical aid to refugees of the Armenian Genocide during the First World War. There she meets Armen, a young Armenian engineer who has already lost his wife and infant daughter. After leaving Aleppo and traveling into Egypt to join the British Army, he begins to write Elizabeth letters, realizing that he has fallen in love with the wealthy young American.

The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay by Michael Chabon

A young escape artist and budding magician named Joe Kavalier arrives on the doorstep of his cousin, Sammy Clay. While the long shadow of Hitler falls across Europe, America is happily in thrall to the Golden Age of comic books, and in a distant corner of Brooklyn, Sammy is looking for a way to cash in on the craze. He finds the ideal partner in the aloof, artistically gifted Joe, and together they embark on an adventure that takes them deep into the heart of Manhattan, and the heart of old-fashioned American ambition. From the shared fears, dreams, and desires of two teenage boys, they spin comic book tales of the heroic, fascist-fighting Escapist and the beautiful, mysterious Luna Moth, otherworldly mistress of the night.

The Baker's Daughter: A Novel by Sarah McCoy

In 1945, Elsie Schmidt is a naive teenager, as eager for her first sip of champagne as she is for her first kiss. She and her family have been protected from the worst of the terror and desperation overtaking her country by a high-ranking Nazi who wishes to marry her. So when an escaped Jewish boy arrives on Elsie's doorstep on Christmas Eve, Elsie understands that opening the door would put all she loves in danger.

The Chaperone by Laura Moriarty

Only a few years before becoming a famous silent-film star and an icon of her generation, a fifteen-year-old Louise Brooks leaves Wichita, Kansas, to study with the prestigious Denishawn School of Dancing in New York. Much to her annoyance, she is accompanied by a thirty-six-year-old chaperone, who is neither mother nor friend. Cora Carlisle, a complicated but traditional woman with her own reasons for making the trip, has no idea what she's in for. Young Louise, already stunningly beautiful and sporting her famous black bob with blunt bangs, is known for her arrogance and her lack of respect for convention. Ultimately, the five weeks they spend together will transform their lives forever.

A Suitable Boy: A Novel by Vikram Seth

Vikram Seth's novel is, at its core, a love story: Lata and her mother, Mrs. Rupa Mehra, are both trying to find -- through love or through exacting maternal appraisal -- a suitable boy for Lata to marry. Set in the early 1950s, in an India newly independent and struggling through a time of crisis, *A Suitable Boy* takes us into the richly imagined world of four large extended families and spins a compulsively readable tale of their lives and loves. A sweeping panoramic portrait of a complex, multiethnic society in flux, *A Suitable Boy* remains the story of ordinary people caught up in a web of love and ambition, humor and sadness, prejudice and reconciliation, the most delicate social etiquette and the most appalling violence.

~This book discussion guide including the further reading recommendation list was prepared by the Oliver Wolcott Library.