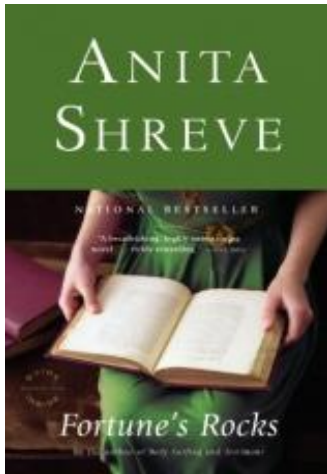


Fortune's Rocks: A Novel

by Anita Shreve



About the Book

A stunning new work from Anita Shreve, the author of the acclaimed bestsellers **The Pilot's Wife** and **The Weight of Water**, **Fortune's Rocks** is a profound and moving story about unwise love and the choices that transform a life.

On a beach in New Hampshire at the turn of the last century, a young woman is drawn into a rocky, disastrous passage to adulthood. Olympia Biddeford is the only child of a prominent Boston couple--a precocious and well-educated daughter, alive with ideas and flush with the first stirrings of maturity. Her summer at the family's vacation home in **Fortune's Rocks** is transformed by the arrival of a doctor, a friend of her father's, whose new book about mill-town laborers has caused a sensation. Olympia is captivated by his thinking, his stature, and his drive to do right--even as she is overwhelmed for the first time by irresistible sexual desire. She and the doctor--a married man, a father, and nearly three times her age--come together in an unthinkable, torturous, hopelessly passionate affair. Throwing aside propriety and self-preservation, Olympia plunges forward with cataclysmic results that are the price of straying in an unforgiving era. Olympia is cast out of the world she knows, and **Fortune's Rocks** is the story of her determination to reinvent her broken life--and claim the one thing she finds she cannot live without.

A meditation on the erotic life of women, an exploration of class prejudices, and most of all a portrayal of the thoughts and actions of an unforgettable young woman, **Fortune's Rocks** is a masterpiece of narrative drama, beautifully written by one of the most accomplished novelists of our time.

Discussion Guide

1. Is Olympia's innocence in the opening scene believable?
2. How did the absence of strong female role models affect Olympia's emotional development?

3. Olympia evolves into a passionate woman in a rigid society. Does her isolated upbringing as an only child who is home-schooled contribute to this? How?
4. How does Shreve foreshadow future events? Do these scenes help to explain Olympia's decisions later in the book?
5. Was Zachariah Coates's action justifiable? Was it purely malicious? Did he have ulterior motives?
6. "It seemed the most elemental gesture to take a child from a man," says Olympia (p. 441). Discuss the various instances in which Olympia takes a child from John's hands.
7. Olympia is a mature teenager, and she accepts responsibility for her situation. As a fifteen year-old, though, can she be blamed for the affair and the pregnancy?
8. If John was not married and a father of four children, would you feel differently about his relationship with Olympia? At the beginning, did he love Olympia, or just feel tremendous desire for her?
9. If you were in Olympia's shoes, could you have made the decision she made regarding her son? Was it the right decision for the child? For her?
10. Discuss the theme of possession. Olympia says that she never "possessed" either John (p. 208) or her son (p. 436). Is it ever possible for a person to possess another?
11. What issues are raised at the trial regarding class? Could these be raised in a court of law today? Are they valid?

Author Bio

Anita Shreve was a high school teacher and a freelance magazine journalist before writing fiction full time. She was the author 19 novels, including *THE STARS ARE FIRE* as well as the international bestseller *THE PILOT'S WIFE*, and *THE WEIGHT OF WATER*, a finalist for the Orange Prize. On March 29, 2018, Shreve passed away from cancer at the age of 71.

Critical Praise

"A milestone in her career, a marvel of freshness. The level of suspense never falters, but becomes breathtaking. The astounding denouement of cascading events will leave no reader unmoved. Shreve's hand has never been so sure as it is here. This book should take off like a rocket."

Fortune's Rocks: A Novel

by Anita Shreve

Publication Date: January 2, 2001

Genres: Fiction

Paperback: 480 pages

Publisher: Back Bay Books

ISBN-10: 0316678104

ISBN-13: 9780316678100