

# The Glassblower of Murano

by Marina Fiorato



## About the Book

Venice, 1681. Glassblowing is the lifeblood of the Republic, and Venetian mirrors are more precious than gold. Jealously guarded by the murderous Council of Ten, the glassblowers of Murano are virtually imprisoned on their island in the lagoon. But the greatest of the artists, Corradino Manin, sells his methods and his soul to the Sun King, Louis XIV of France, to protect his secret daughter. In the present day his descendant, Leonora Manin, leaves an unhappy life in London to begin a new one as a glassblower in Venice. As she finds new life and love in her adoptive city, her fate becomes inextricably linked with that of her ancestor and the treacherous secrets of his life begin to come to light.

## Discussion Guide

1. Glass and Venice are both metaphors for change in the novel. How do they mirror the changing reflections of the characters? In particular, discuss this facet of the novel in relation to the roles of Leonora and Corradino.
2. Marina Fiorato uses imagery of glass: its beauty yet changeability; its strength yet fragility, throughout her novel. How does this portray an unfamiliar, dark, and sinister side to the most romantic European city?
3. Do you think Corradino Manin did the right thing by his ?betrayal??
4. Discuss the narrative structure of *The Glassblower of Murano*. In what ways do the two intertwined strands of the novel, the story set in the Renaissance and Leonora's modern-day narrative, shape the story?
5. Marina Fiorato says in her acknowledgments that having a child is like letting your heart walk around outside your body. Discuss the various relationships between parent and child in the story. How do they vary, and in what ways are they similar? What do you think is signified by Leonora's gift of the glass heart pendant to her child?

6. How important was it for Leonora to leave everything behind and move to Venice, and what do her discoveries teach her about family?
7. Think about the male-dominated fornace on Murano. Leonora has an uncertain relationship with the maestros in the factory because she is a woman in what remains a man's world. How do you think this relationship affects her view of her own femininity?
8. Is it acceptable --- because of the importance of glassblowing to Venetian heritage --- for Leonora to be treated as an outsider by the maestros?
9. The story of *The Glassblower of Murano* is centered around Corradino's secret and Leonora's search for the truth. Discuss the various elements of mystery in these pages. What types of narrative devices does Marina Fiorato use to keep the reader guessing?
10. Few places are as romanticized, celebrated, and praised as Venice. Have you traveled to Venice? If so, do you agree with the portrayal of Venice in the story? If not, how did reading this book confirm or deny your preconceived notions of one of the world's most famous places?

## Author Bio

Marina Fiorato is half-Venetian and a history graduate of Oxford University and the University of Venice, where she specialized in the study of Shakespeare's plays as an historical source. She has worked as an illustrator, actress, and film reviewer, and designed tour visuals for rock bands including U2 and the Rolling Stones. **The Glassblower of Murano**, her debut novel, has generated enormous attention in Europe, having sold over 100,000 copies in Germany and ranked #1 on the Independent Publishers' list in the UK. She was married on the Grand Canal in Venice, with a reception on Murano, and now lives in London with her family.

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