

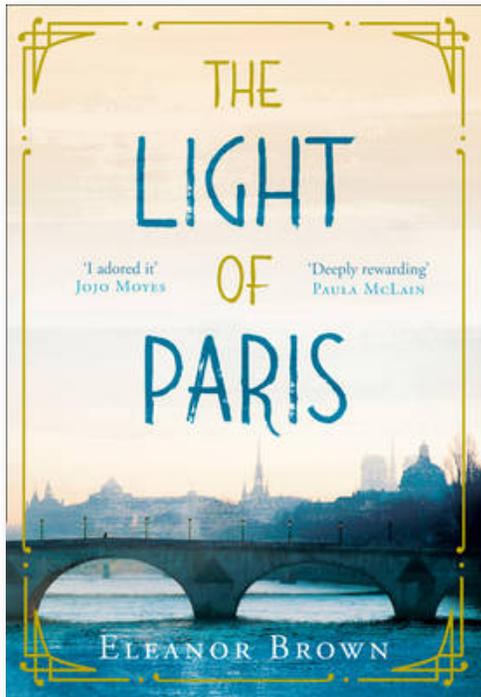


Helping you choose
your next book

LoveReading Reader reviews of **The Light of Paris** by Eleanor Brown

 HarperCollins Publishers

Below are the complete reviews, written by LoveReading members.



Beryl White

A wonderful calming read. Warning - don't start reading it if you are planning an early night because once you start you won't want to stop!

This book is wonderful. I don't know why it is so special because the plot isn't particularly original but it is so beautifully written that you almost feel as if you are with the characters. No housework was done for a week and I was coming home from work at midnight and reading for at least an hour before going to bed. It is compulsive.

I haven't heard of Eleanor Brown before but I shall certainly look out for her books in the future. I am delighted to see that she has written an earlier book so will definitely be reading that one.

Nicki Southwell

Two women's lives, some 75 years apart, experience the difficulties conforming to their own society. Choices made and decided, these women face big dilemmas. Is there own happiness worth it?

Chicago 1999 finds Madeleine in an unhappy and loveless marriage to Phillip. Her love of painting has been quashed by her controlling husband as he tells her

what to wear, do and eat. So she settles for the vacuous life as wife to a successful businessman. She meets a restaurateur when staying at her mothers, and realises that she could be happy out of her staid marriage.

Whilst staying with her Mother she finds her Grandmother's diaries and realises that her dreams were also taken away. Margie has spent time in Paris, fallen in love with an artist Sebastien, ran out of money then returned to New York pregnant. In her position in society, she has to conform to the life her parents want and accepts a suitable marriage proposal. No-one could have guessed any of this.

The dialogue is good and is descriptive about living as we are expected to, not as we want. Margie had to conform to the strict regime that her class dictates, but Madeleine decided not to.

My thanks to Lovereading for the opportunity to read this book in exchange for an unbiased review.

Phylippa Smithson

It took me a while to get into this account of daughter-mother relationship but it was well worth persevering.

Switching between 1999 and the mid 20s, we learn of the struggles Madeline and Margie has in fighting to be the people they want to be and not moulded into strangers as a result of their respective Mothers' dominance.

Madeline at least escapes her home life by marrying, albeit replacing her controlling parent with an equally controlling husband. But who she really is, is an artist who is forced to compromise her passion by simply volunteering at a local art gallery and even this is disliked by her husband.

Margie breaks free from the hackles of her 1920s home life dominated by women who marry, have children and as women who lunch when she refuses to marry a man whose motivation is, as it is that of her parents, simply to get closer to her Father's expanding business. Her penance is to be forced to chaperone her 18 year old cousin, Evelyn, to Europe. But this is no penance for Margie who finds a passion for life she could never have dreamed existed so far from home.

When Madeline comes across her grandmother's (Margie) diaries she meets a lady who inspires her own break from the unrewarding life she has found herself in and into bravely choosing a life she has been denied all her life.

Great read and now away book my flights to Paris to rekindle my own love of this wonderful City.

Val Rowe

The perfect summer read. I devoured it in two days whilst on holiday.

Unhappy with her life and marriage, Madeline escapes to her mother's house where she discovers a diary belonging to her grandmother, Margie. Inspired and moved by her grandmother's bravery, Madeline confronts her past, determined to change her attitude towards her own situation.

I fell in love with this novel from the very first page. It was so easy to read and to visualise the characters. I especially enjoyed the descriptive passages, the depth of the inner most thoughts of the characters and the way in which Eleanor Brown weaves together the development of the events in Madeleine and Margies' lives.

Evocative and emotive with a few surprising twists along the way, this is a novel to savour and enjoy. I stayed up late in order to complete the final chapters which stayed with me for several days.

Do include it on your holiday reading list.

Joy Bosworth

Whether 1919 or 1999 woman can either succumb or resist living in a glided cage. Madeline writes in 1999 of her unhappiness in a cold convenient marriage. Margie writes in 1919 of her dread of the above. Margie who transforms herself into Marguerite is given an opportunity to escape an arranged marriage and seizes it with both hands. This leads to her becoming the grandmother of Madeline.

It seems the women of the family alternate slender beauty and sturdy stodginess each generation. So Madeline can never carry-off the stylish clothes her mother expects her to wear, looking as elegant as she does herself. Margie had exactly this problem – but even less freedom. Her only escape is her world of writing, with Madeline it is art but she allows herself to be ostracized from all she held dear. So when she had the opportunity to reclaim her youthful pursuits the ensuing romance many simply be because she has found a man who allows her to eat, rather than stay agonizingly slim.

Both sections are good, but the earlier story is really fascinating. How a well-brought up slightly post-Edwardian era American views the jazz age in Paris. How hairstyles can shackle or liberate as does the more obvious corsetry.

I'd have preferred more of Margie and some detail of the sandwich-mother but overall it is a really enjoyable book.

Jane Pepler

The story of grandmother and granddaughter who although separated by generations have a very similar story to tell.

A book that slips between two time periods - Jazz Age Paris when Margie is away from her parents for the first time and Chicago in 1999 when Margie's granddaughter Madeleine is trapped in an unhappy marriage with no apparent means of escaping from it.

I usually love novels that skip from one time period to another but I found this book lacking in plot line and good characters. I found both Margie and Madeleine to be lacking in substance and back bone and felt desperate for them to be stronger female characters who could stand up to their families and do what they wanted to do.

*The two main characters have similar stories in that they feel like they do not belong with their families. **I felt more of an affinity with the modern character Madeleine than her grandmother but neither character really grabbed me.***

I enjoyed the ending of the book, there was a slight twist towards the end of the story which I believed to work out positively, but generally I was glad to have finished the book and am unsure whether I would want to read anything else by this author.

Dana Captainino

I loved this book. The parallel stories of Madeline in 1999 and her grandmother in the 1920s work very well and illustrate how a sense of family duty and the arguments around choosing the conflicting paths of creativity or stability endure.

Both women are trapped in unhappy marriages essentially because of obligation to tradition. When Madeline find's Margie's diary it gives her the inspiration she needs to change things.

Madeline having escaped the confines of the marital home in Chicago returns to her mother's home in the South. The slow pace provides her with time enough to read and imbibe the fabulous story surrounding her grandmother's somewhat exotic trip to Paris in the glorious age of jazz.

Here Madeline begins to make new friends and slowly builds her strength to make some incredible changes. But will she? Can she? - Follow them through.

Don't let The Light of Paris pass you by. It is unusual, involving and a really good read.

Sarah Jones

Light hearted, pleasant reading about two generations of women struggling to find their place in the world.

Madeleine is unhappy with her life, trapped in a marriage of convenience having to keep up appearances to please her mother. When she finds her grandmother's diaries she discovers that Margie was not the grandmother she knew. This story alternates between Madeleine trying to find herself and her own way in life and Margie who defied convention and followed her dreams in 1920s Paris.

This was light-hearted reading and piqued my interest enough to continue. I was more interested in Margie's timeline as it seemed obvious as to what would happen with Madeleine. It was quite uneventful and slow paced, but this didn't really matter as it was just a calm, pleasant read. I would recommend this to anyone who wants a light happy story about self-discovery.

Lorraine Blencoe

*Any book with Paris in the title attracts me automatically, but I'm not sure this is something I would ordinarily read if I just went by the blurb. But I soon wanted to know more about the stories of two generations of women in the same family running alongside each other. **The characters are teasingly drawn. The descriptions are effortless.** Depictions of Paris in 1924 and small town America in 1999 are minute and elaborate at the same time. I very much wanted to be a part of the Paris so skilfully depicted. It is refreshing to read a story about a normal woman who makes mistakes in life. The ending is also quite different from books of this genre. I enjoyed this novel more than I expected to and suddenly I'm questioning my relationship with my daughter!*

Katie Hoare

The Light of Paris tells the story of Madeline and Margie, granddaughter and grandmother, the starting point set eighty years apart. Both women give the feeling of isolation from the rest of their families. Margie, is a bit of a dreamer and loves to read, and does not wish to get married at the start, and is sent by her mother to France with another female relative to keep an eye on her. Whilst Madeline's marriage comes under strain she returns to her family home and reads her grandmothers diary, and taking up her interest in art again. Madeline's account is told in the first person and Margie's story in the second person, but both sides of the story are brilliantly told with humour. **The reader is drawn into the story of both women and, you, along with both characters, find a sense of fulfilment.**

Edel Waugh

This book is the literary equivalent of chocolate cake and whipped cream.

This gorgeous story takes place in Paris and Chicago. It is about two women from the one family, Madeline in the 90's in Chicago and her grandmother Margie in Paris during the Jazz age, where she was a free spirit . What I loved about both these women was that they had an unconventional outlook on what way their life should look, and what they needed to do to make themselves happy. They were kindred spirits living in very different times but with the same types of problems making me wonder does life really ever change that much no matter how much we learn and progress , the most basic human emotions remain the same. The story puts great emphasis on the importance of staying true to yourself if you want to be truly happy and I found myself agreeing with the author.

Judith Waring

I loved this book right from the first page, the first paragraph even, which struck such a strong cord within me.

I don't often find a book with passages that I feel compelled to underline because they describe feelings and situations I am able to identify with so well and there were numerous other sentences throughout this novel that were just as insightful and thought-provoking as that first sentence. I really liked the way the telling of two lives unfolded side by side, and the way the book was cleverly

written by swapping between the two, chapter by chapter, keeping the reader clear on what was happening in the novel and keeping both of the stories, and the women, continually 'fresh' in your mind. Each female has a strong character hidden away beneath their exteriors, they have each been conditioned to be meek and obedient but gradually they find their own strengths to stand up and be their own person and grasp life to it's full extent. And on approaching the final chapters of the book it then becomes very clear how Margie's life story has been running in sequence and developing along the exact same lines for her granddaughter Madeleine and it just made me smile with satisfaction. I'm really pleased that I was given the opportunity to read such a lovely and well-written novel. I'll certainly be looking for this author again.

Fiona Maclean

I loved this book. I found the parallel stories engaging and enjoyed the characterisation of both Madeleine and Margie.

A tale of two parallel lives, two women oppressed by their families and by marriage but set two generations apart. The lights of Paris bring joy to Marguerite and enlightenment to her granddaughter.

It alternates between 1924 with Margie's (Marguerite, Margaret) story and 1999, her granddaughter Madeleine's. I sometime kind this kind of structure confusing, but here it was quite simple and easy to follow.

Although I have siblings I did identify with Madeleine and her relationship struggles. Her marriage fits exactly with society as it was in the 1990 (I was in my 20s) - with women realising that the marriage wasn't necessarily the route they needed to take, but often not having the courage or role models to follow. Madeleine breaks free finally - her resolution brought about by reading her grandmother's memoirs. The two women have a lot in common: low self-image, a talent that is denied, and an oppressive family situation. Each of them quietly rebels - each walks away to try and start their own life. But in the case of Margie, she's pulled back by a twist of fate.

As she reads Margie's memoirs, Madeleine discovers parallels - and ultimately gains an understanding of where her talent originated. Here's a joyous tale of discovery. Sadly, Margie's story doesn't end so happily.

This is a book I could take on holiday but one which has sufficient depth to be worth reading again at home.

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Sharon McKinlay

A very entertaining story.

A beautifully written story about two women set in different times. One in the present & one in the past. Great characters. Very entertaining story.

Fiona Rothery

The Light of Paris is a very gentle novel with an emotional insight into the lives of two women, Madeleine in 1999 and her Grandmother Margie in the early 1900's. It portrays the American society in which they were both raised. Despite being decades apart their lives follow a similar pattern bound by conventions and family expectations which hinder their dreams. This novel sensitively describes the awakening of both women, the chances they take and the secrets they are forced to keep. Madeleine becomes aware of her Grandmother's life through reading her diaries and is inspired by these to have the courage to follow her own dreams. I enjoyed this pleasant novel as it provides a good parallel to the lives and feelings of the two women. It also highlights the strong contrast between traditional and conventional American life and the developing lack of convention and artistic awareness in Paris after the first world war. A very delightful novel.