

**Chapter 1 : Detailed Review Summary of Girl in Hyacinth Blue by Susan Vreeland**

*Girl in Hyacinth Blue is a lovely historical fiction with a twist--the tale is told backwards starting from the present and working its way back in time. The main character is a painting--supposedly a rare original by Vermeer.*

Tracing the influence of one extraordinary picture on a succession of human lives, it touches gently yet thoughtfully on such weighty topics as the immortality of a great artwork and the ways in which art can be used for various ends. In the course of her explorations, Vreeland covers a lot of time and space: Among other things, Vreeland has given us an art detective story, since the early chapters suggest that this marvelous painting--a portrait of a young girl whose face seems to be filled with dreams and longings--may be a lost Vermeer. When we first encounter it, the picture is hidden from view, its possession the dark secret of a lonely mathematician whose father looted it from a Dutch Jewish family that he then sent to die in a concentration camp. But, as is the way with such things, he also feels compelled to show off his trophy. Vreeland is especially good at conveying the tensions that arise among her characters but go largely unspoken. She is also adept at capturing the differing sensibilities of various historical periods, working unobtrusively and successfully avoiding a contrived "period" feel. In the process, she provides her own nicely sketched gallery of portraits: In all these episodes, the painting is pivotal, both in a practical and a spiritual sense. The aristocratic Frenchwoman hates all things Dutch except the girl in the painting because she recognizes in her a sense of hope that she herself has lost. In the end, each woman is forced to sell the painting so that each, in her own very different way, can survive. But for each of them, the possession of "Girl in Hyacinth Blue" leads to profound changes. But the crowning chapter is the final one, which introduces the girl in the picture and provides a glimpse of what is actually going on behind those dreamy eyes. Throughout "Girl in Hyacinth Blue," Vreeland strikes a pleasant balance between the timeless world of the painting as a work of art and the finite worlds of its possessors and admirers--not to mention the world of its subject and its creator. The chronology is reversed: Set in Amsterdam during the Nazi occupation, the moving "A Night Different From All Other Nights" portrays the Jewish family from whom the painting will be stolen after they have been sent to a concentration camp, and re-poses the question also asked in the first story of how killers can revere beauty. Two narratives that treat the same event--the birth of a baby and a turning point in a marriage--take place in neighboring hamlets near Groningen during the St. Nicholas flood of Each fills in details the other does not have, and each provides indelible images of brutally hard life in a waterlogged land. In the penultimate "Still Life," set in 17th century Delft, a poverty-hounded Vermeer begins the portrait of his daughter Magdalena; "Magdalena Looking" which closes the book, reflects the evanescence of the moments that paintings capture. Unobtrusively, Vreeland builds a picture of the Dutch character, equal parts sober work ethic and faith in a harsh religion. Against these national characteristics she juxtaposes the universal human capacity for love--romantic, familial, parental--and a kind of obsessive love, the quest for beauty that distinguishes otherwise ordinary lives. The historical details that ground each narrative in time and place are obliquely revealed. Only the opening story disappoints. It seems staged rather than psychologically compelling. There is suspense, as well; one wants to read these tales at one sitting, to discover how the Vermeer influenced everyone who possessed it. Vreeland paints her canvas with the sure strokes of a talented artist. The only wobble in this elegant little book is at the start, where a stiffness in character may be intended but jars even so: All the evidence--of technique, color, subject--is there, yet the painting lacks documentation to validate its authenticity: Such reader-privilege becomes an overwhelming emotional test when Vreeland goes back to visit that family, in that year, just before the theft "A Night Different From All Other Nights". Farther back still, a happily married Dutch couple owns the painting--and when the husband admits that the girl in it reminds him of an earlier lover, the marriage is briefly shaken "Adagia". Still deeper back goes Vreeland, taking up with masterful insight, feeling, and control the life of a small Dutch farm family caught in the great flood of ; of a young engineer who loves, loses pathetically , and hands on the painting; of Vermeer himself as he paints the picture, struggling against debt, father of 11; and, in a wondrous, bittersweet epiphany, of the daughter herself whom Vermeer chose as his model. Extraordinarily skilled historical fiction: The

"novel" follows the trail of an "unknown" painting by the Dutch master Vermeer--The Girl in Hyacinth Blue--from the time of its creation in seventeenth-century Holland to the present day. In each of the eight independent but chronologically linked chapters, the painting shows up as a prop in the lives of different owners, and in telling the circumstances under which these people acquire or lose the painting, Vreeland gives the readers a sense of the evolution of Dutch social history. The first chapter opens with the discovery of the painting in the basement of a mathematician. The second chapter features the circumstances of the Jewish family from whom the painting was stolen. The remaining chapters take the readers further back into Dutch history until the final, or rather the original, moment when Vermeer decided to paint the portrait of his daughter, a young girl dressed in hyacinth blue. To still it for a moment, long enough to paint, for eternity, ah. He noticed "her eyes, pale cerulean Magdalena recalls sitting for the portrait and remembers how she wondered then what she meant to her father. She teaches English literature, creative writing and art in the San Diego public schools. Girl in Hyacinth Blue should appeal to readers who enjoy nontraditional love stories. The blended hues, explicit detail and engaging subject might interact hypnotically upon the canvas and give you reason for pause. Then, because the work is overwhelming, you may close your eyes and ignore the small placard with historical details, choosing instead to imagine the artist, the studio, the very day this masterpiece was created. In her magical second novel, Susan Vreeland guides us back through Dutch centuries to the moment of provenance of a painting that, in the present day, hangs in the study of a reclusive math professor. This still life of a young girl peering through a window serves as the emotional centerpiece in this finely woven series of tales, presented in reverse chronology. Each story in this novel is intimately related through an admiration for the innocence and beauty of the girl in the painting; and a varied expression of love by a melange of intriguing, real characters is a running theme. This painting he loves--of a young girl seated at a table, gazing outward at an unseen landscape--was obtained during Nazi looting of a Jewish household during the Holocaust. The painting is unsigned, but it bears strong resemblance to the work of Dutch master Vermeer. His whole life the professor has been unable to share the painting, the girl, with the world, fearing that the atrocity behind her custody may serve to steal her from him. When he finally succumbs and invites a fellow professor--an art professor--over to his home, the ownership lineage is explored, first in real time by the visiting professor, and then back hundreds of years as Vreeland uses her narrative license. In a touching fashion, we are introduced to the family of the Holocaust, the girl in the painting watching over them just days before they are removed from the house and taken to their deaths. Further back then, we see a precious married couple, struggling with their own nostalgic angst, offering the painting to their soon-to-be-married daughter. An aristocratic wife sells this girl in the hyacinth blue so she may escape a loveless marriage. We also see her sold to provide bread for a loving but struggling family, and we see her escape an 18th-century flood by an almost divine intervention. It is not until the final section, when we are introduced to the artist and shown the very moment of inspiration and creation, that we meet her in person, a child full of youthful exuberance and longing for requited love. We hear her name for the first time, though we have known her for years and watched her give so much love and provide hope to so many. That moment of inspiration--it has been with me forever. She enables the reader to explore the thoughts of characters omnisciently in some instances, and with a limited, first person view at other times, through varied narrators. Her depiction of Dutch history is engaging and thorough, but she never gets superfluous with drone description and minutiae. Most remarkably, she has painted a masterpiece of her own with her words, created an image so vivid that readers may expect to see the "Girl in Hyacinth Blue" hanging on a museum wall. Ultimately, though Vreeland spends considerable time describing the artwork, it is the stillness of the girl in the painting that provides an intimate portrait of the lives witnessed. We see through her eyes, as they look upon her owners--poor and rich, old and young--and cannot escape the power of love and sometimes cruel, unavoidable rigidity of the passage of time. The premise is fascinating, the presentation unique, and the artistry by which Vreeland intertwines the stories, introducing the tribulations and trials of the individuals and families long since passed away, is exceptionally engaging. With sensitivity and suspensefulness, the author recreates three centuries of everyday Dutch life. She almost makes one see the haunting painting--a young woman seated near a window--which touches the souls, and sometimes the fortunes, of its widely diverse possessors. At the end, even the girl in hyacinth blue

herself seems to become real in this beautifully written exploration of the power of art.

Chapter 2 : Girl in Hyacinth Blue Summary and Analysis (like SparkNotes) | Free Book Notes

*The Girl in Hyacinth Blue, by Susan Vreeland, was a well-written, thought provoking and inspiring book; but to tell you the truth, I probably would not have finished it if it weren't for the fact that I was in a book club that keeps me accountable.*

He admires the work but has never shown it to anyone else, as he inherited it from his father, who had been a Nazi soldier. Torn about keeping it, he nearly destroys the work out of guilt. Click here to see the rest of this review Next, we see the previous owners of the painting, a Jewish couple in the Netherlands with a lively son and his quieter little sister. The young girl interrupts work she should be doing to help prepare for Passover dinner to look at the work, entranced by the idea of someone as shy and thoughtful as she is. They have some pet pigeons upstairs, which unfortunately someone has to kill, as Jews at the time were no longer allowed to own birds who could be trained as messengers. Their daughter is getting married and they need a suitable gift for her. However, the painting reminds the husband of his first love, who was not his wife. Then we see the family who sold the husband the painting. The housewife found the painting, along with an abandoned baby, in a small boat after a flood, with a note: She and her husband take in the baby and raise him, but life is hard and he is another mouth to feed. The wife loves the painting, as she feels she is trapped in a dreary life working hard in a cold, gray climate. Her husband tells her to go sell it as they need the money, but she holds onto it as long as possible, imagining herself in another world, where she can sit and think in a warm, comfortable room. After the winter thaws, when she can get to town and market, she prepares meals from the seed potatoes so they can keep eating. When her husband goes to get those for spring planting, and finds them gone, he is furious. She goes and stays with her mother for awhile, in the warmer town where she grew up, with more colorful flowers and homes. She realizes how homesick she has been, and feels sure her mother will sympathize with her about the painting. But instead, her mother tells her to give up her silly luxury and be glad she has such a hardworking husband. So, at last, she heads for town and sells the piece. Then, we see the man who put the painting in the boat with the baby, his son. He has a love affair with a young woman who is quite beautiful but has serious mental issues and also old country superstitions. She gives birth to twins, loses touch with reality and kills one of them, for which she is publicly hanged. Powerless to save the woman he loves, and who both entrances and repulses him, he hides her surviving baby in a garret to avoid the public disgrace of his having fathered the child of a woman suspected of witchcraft. When a flood comes to town, he puts the baby boy in a canoe, with the note and the painting. The painting is something simple for her to look at and admire, a peaceful family home scene in the midst of her collapsing marriage. Near the end, we see Vermeer himself, thoughtful as always, arranging the interior scenes and waiting for the lighting to be just so for him to paint. He wonders if he will be able to make it financially or if he will have to return to some other sort of work, but things work out in time for him to be able to create another miniature. He admires his own work, the delicacy of the simple image, a painting of his daughter. She thought to ask him to teach her, but could never find the words or get up the courage. As a grown woman, she finds his painting of her at an estate sale. She admires the work, and wonders at the idea of having a picture of her go out to a stranger. Strange, she reflects, to have someone get so close to her without ever knowing her, just thinking of her as an ideal of beauty. Best part of story, including ending: I loved how each chapter connected to the others through a common theme and motif. Best scene in story: The scene and story that was most affecting for me was the piece about the hardworking country housewife, up north in a place where everything was cold and dreary, where her husband was loving and hardworking but talked and thought mostly about simple potatoes. She held onto the painting secretly for months, eating the seed crops so as not to have to sell the painting to buy more food. It became her escape, a reminder that life was more than labor and food, until at last she had to part with it. Even her own mother did not understand the value of the painting to her, and chided her for not appreciating her hardworking husband and for holding on to a luxury, but Vreeland did a very evocative job of communicating why the miniature of the young woman meant so much to her. Opinion about the main character: Vermeer, the painter, gave dignity to ordinary life, the home and family, through his choices of subject matter in his

paintings. He showed respect for the women in his life - mothers, daughters, servants - in this way, and Vreeland brings this through in the novel.

### Chapter 3 : Reviews of Girl in Hyacinth Blue

*Throughout "Girl in Hyacinth Blue," Vreeland strikes a pleasant balance between the timeless world of the painting as a work of art and the finite worlds of its possessors and admirers--not to mention the world of its subject and its creator.*

The Girl in Hyacinth Blue proceeds backward in time, following the history of one Vermeer painting, of a girl in a blue wrap, inside of an open window. The painting has enormous value in the present, but as the novel proceeds back to the time when it was painted, its value rises and falls based on whether its owners know where it came from, and whether they see any value in art. Except for this painting, which is present in every chapter, The Girl in Hyacinth Blue is really a collection of linked short stories. The stories vary from a coming of age story, to stories of love and loss, of murder and execution, to longing and nostalgia and death. The history goes from the present day the book was written in back to the mid-seventeenth-century, when Vermeer made the picture. They hold onto the painting for its ineffable qualities, and part with it only when necessary. If they take money for it, they do so only because the money will have a profound affect on their lives. In this composite picture of the culture that touched this one painting, Susan Vreeland has painted a portrait of her own, of the past that comes down with each work. The teacher who owns the painting knows that his father acquired it from the household of a Jewish family that had been deported for execution, and he cannot reveal it to the world, but he needs his colleague to understand its value. The second story depicts a Passover holiday among Jews who are anticipating the Holocaust. Their pigeons had brought them news of the seizure of the diamond trade in Amsterdam, and they kill their own pigeons so as to stay out of trouble with the Nazis. The girl who kills the pigeons feels a certain kinship with the girl looking out the window in the painting, and she knows that this holiday has marked the end of something for her, and the beginning of something else, a life of deeper knowledge for her. The third story centers on the parents of a girl who is in love with and engaged to a boy. When the wife is angered by this invocation of earlier love, the husband agrees to give up the painting as a concession to his wife, and a tribute to their marriage. In the next story, the narrator is a woman in high society, who has an affair with a musician. When the affair breaks up her marriage, she escapes from her husband by selling the painting. In the fifth story, the painting arrives in the household of a Dutch family whose house and lands have been flooded. The painting was put in their boat with an infant, and a note: Sell the painting, feed the baby. The wife wants to keep both baby and painting, but when she realizes its value—“it can give her and her husband what they need to live well”—she sells it and uses the money to fund their homestead. The sixth story tells how the painting ended up in the boat in the previous story. An engineering student has fallen in love with a girl and gotten her pregnant. The girl bears twins, but she kills the girl child because she has a hare lip. He lives in a chaotic household, and cannot often get quiet for painting. However, when he sees his daughter Magdalena after an outburst, he gets her to sit still so he can paint the picture that has been the subject of the other stories. In the final story, Magdalena is a dreamy girl who wants to live the enormous life she sees everywhere around her. She wants to paint, to bring things to life as she sees them. But she marries, and remains buried, as an adult, with the housework that consumes her as a girl. She cannot afford it at auction, though, and it goes to a wealthy family. She concludes that she would like to tell the history of the world through the most minute things in it, and she marvels as the mysterious fact that people would see her face and be moved by her expression, and she would never know them. This section contains words approx.

### Chapter 4 : Susan Vreeland Announcing Girl in Hyacinth Blue

*Summary and reviews of Girl in Hyacinth Blue by Susan Vreeland, plus links to a book excerpt from Girl in Hyacinth Blue and author biography of Susan Vreeland.*

Their eyes, the particular turn of a head, their loneliness or suffering or grief was borrowed by an artist to be seen by other people throughout the years who would never see them face to face. Johannes Vermeer or Van Der Meer was a 17th century Dutch painter who had a modestly successful career. He would have been more successful, made more money, enjoyed a certain level of comfort if only he would paint faster. He did not paint until the mood struck him, commissions were bothersome, rarely of interest. His life was about light and how to capture that light perfectly for all eternity in the pigment of his paint. He traded paintings for food, for shoes for his children, for debts that accumulated as he pondered the subject for his next painting. The Concert by Vermeer In The Concert was stolen from a museum in Boston and has never been recovered. We can hope that it landed in the hands of a collector, who is selfishly hoarding it hopefully in a climate controlled environment. Someday the collector will die and the painting will reemerge. It was returned to the family after the war, but was given to the French government in payment for back taxes in It now hangs in the Louvre. On the back of the painting there is a black ink Swastika. This brings me to the subject of this book. Susan Vreeland begins by introducing us to Cornelius Engelbrecht who has decided to reveal after many years of hiding the existence of the painting, a Vermeer, to his friend and art lover Richard. There are numerous problems in regards to this painting. Provenance, that all important paperwork establishing authenticity, has been lost or separated from the work. Germany, s, opportunities abounded for artwork and other precious things of value to fall into the hands of the less than scrupulous. Look at her eye. It is of Magdalena Vermeer, daughter of the painter. The one most like him. The one with sewing shoved into her hands when her fingers ached for the brushes. When that thought lifted her face to his, she saw his cheeks grow softer, as if he noticed her in the house for the first time. Vreeland begins the book with Cornelius and then steadily takes us back in time with the painting. The people that swirl around the painting are brought to life and the influence of having something so beautiful gracing their lives shows the greedy need we all have to possess something so alluring. One of my favorite stories is of a poor family trying to save their farm from a flood and in the midst of this conflict a baby is laid in their boat along with the painting with instructions to sell the artwork to feed the baby. The painting becomes a source of tension between the husband and wife. The wife doing anything she can to keep it. The wife becomes rebellious, but her mother sets her straight. There is nothing she will ever be able to buy for the rest of her life that will replace the vibrancy of a Vermeer painting. She does leave her mark on the painting because she names it and she passes that name to the buyer. In the later chapters we even meet Vermeer as he struggles with creditors and subjects for art that will inspire him to lift his brush. We meet the mutinous Magdalena as she struggles against the forces trying to make her learn the skills that will make her a valuable housewife. How can you mend when you must create? In the final chapter we see her meeting her painting once again. The book gets better and better as we walk back through history with Vreeland. The later chapters are stellar, poignant, and captivating. They lift the book from a three star to a four star. The author put me in the same room as Vermeer, so much so I could almost see the light the way he saw it.

### Chapter 5 : Girl in Hyacinth Blue Summary & Study Guide

*Susan Vreeland's Girl in Hyacinth Blue traces the changing ownership of a fictional Vermeer painting over several centuries, from its creation to modern day, and fleshes out the stories of each family and why they appreciate the work.*

### Chapter 6 : Girl in Hyacinth Blue Quotes by Susan Vreeland

*Such is the case of the Vermeer painting, Girl in Hyacinth Blue, as described by author Susan Vreeland. The paintingâ€”this girl so simple in her dress and demeanorâ€”immediately claims a space in each of her owners' hearts*

*and lives, as an intimate relationship is formed between objet d'art and her possessor.*

### Chapter 7 : Girl in Hyacinth Blue by Susan Vreeland

*First of all, the "lost Vermeer" painting in Susan Vreeland's novel Girl In Hyacinth Blue is not a copy of an extant painting by Vermeer. It is an imagined work by Vermeer, created in the mind and heart the author.*

### Chapter 8 : Brush with Fate - Wikipedia

*A Teacher's Guide to Susan Vreeland's Girl in Hyacinth Blue 3 VERMEER, THE SPHINX OF DELFT If a work of art is an expression of the artist's temperament, Johannes Vermeer might be considered a deeply contemplative.*

### Chapter 9 : Girl in Hyacinth Blue by Sarah Hafer on Prezi

*The Girl in Hyacinth Blue proceeds backward in time, following the history of one Vermeer painting, of a girl in a blue wrap, inside of an open window. The painting has enormous value in the present, but as the novel proceeds back to the time when it was painted, its value rises and falls based on.*