



The Little Friend

Donna Tartt

Download now

Read Online 

The Little Friend

Donna Tartt

The Little Friend Donna Tartt

Bestselling author Donna Tartt returns with a grandly ambitious and utterly riveting novel of childhood, innocence and evil.

The setting is Alexandria, Mississippi, where one Mother's Day a little boy named Robin Cleve Dufresnes was found hanging from a tree in his parents' yard. Twelve years later Robin's murder is still unsolved and his family remains devastated. So it is that Robin's sister Harriet - unnervingly bright, insufferably determined, and unduly influenced by the fiction of Kipling and Robert Louis Stevenson--sets out to unmask his killer. Aided only by her worshipful friend Hely, Harriet crosses her town's rigid lines of race and caste and burrows deep into her family's history of loss.

The Little Friend Details

Date : Published October 28th 2003 by Vintage (first published October 22nd 2002)

ISBN : 9781400031696

Author : Donna Tartt

Format : Paperback 624 pages

Genre : Fiction, Mystery, Literary Fiction, Contemporary, Abandoned

 [Download The Little Friend ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Little Friend ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online The Little Friend Donna Tartt

From Reader Review *The Little Friend* for online ebook

Melki says

Oh, Harriet, you poor dear.

Twelve and a half, homely and unpopular. The girl with the antique-sounding name and possessor of an "old soul." She has a gruff, common sense approach to life that eschews flattery and wins her few fans among her peers and relatives.

In vain, the aunts tried to teach her to be polite. "But don't you understand, darling," said Tat, "that if you don't like the fruitcake, it's better to eat it anyway instead of hurting your hostess's feelings?"

"But I don't like fruitcake."

"I know you don't Harriet. That's why I used that example."

"But fruitcake is horrible. I don't know anybody that likes it. And if I tell her I like it, she's just going to keep on giving it to me."

You certainly can't argue with that logic.

Harriet was just a babe, plopped down in a wind-up swing, when her 9-year-old brother was murdered in the family's yard during a Mother's Day celebration.

Now, her older sister mostly sleeps and cries. Her mother is mostly sedated. She is raising herself with the help of a stern grandmother, a gaggle of great-aunts and the housekeeper. Having nothing in common with girls her age, she hangs out with a passel of boys; enough boys so that they can play the apostles to her Jesus in a reenactment of the Last Supper. (This was one of my favorite parts of the book!)

Her biggest goals for the summer? Avoid going to church camp and win the library summer reading contest. (Who could not LOVE this girl?) Oh, and she's decided to solve the murder of her brother, committed so many years ago. This bit of Nancy Drewism will land her smack dab in a nest of vipers (literally), and deep into the dangerous world of a family of meth-dealing ne'er-do-wells.

This seems to be a love it/hate it title. I can see why it's not for everyone. The pacing is slow and languid, much like the Mississippi summer setting of the book. Things take their own sweet time unfolding. Many of the characters are not likable. And, yeah, there are unanswered questions.

I kept reading because I was in love with Harriet. As one character describes her, *...Harriet was not sweet or whimsical by any stretch of the imagination. Harriet was a trip.*

And that she was...

With distaste, Harriet reflected upon how life had beaten down the adults she knew, every single grown up. Something strangled them as they grew older, made them doubt their own powers - laziness? Habit? Their grip slackened; they stopped fighting and resigned themselves to what happened. "That's Life." That's what they all said. "That's Life, Harriet, that's just how it is, you'll see."

Well, Harriet would not see. She was young still, and the chains had not grown tight around her ankles. Whatever was to be done she would do it. She would strike now--while she still could, before her nerve broke and her spirit failed her--with nothing to sustain her but her own gigantic solitude.

She is gonna grow up to be one heckuva woman!

Leslie says

This book, quite honestly, infuriated me. The opening chapter is stellar and haunting -- so much so that I slogged through 500+ pages on its promise alone. Anyone beginning this novel will (rightly so) expect a Southern Gothic murder mystery. The premise (at least the one outlined on the dust jacket) has so much potential -- set in a sleepy backwater Mississippi town, it follows the "adventures" of an overly precocious girl from a fallen plantation family (think Scout Finch meets Nancy Drew) who has vowed to find and punish her brother's killer. However, the novel's momentum is quickly stalled by chapters and chapters of *Abject Naturalism* -- scene after scene of lush, dramatic, heady descriptions, microscopically attentive odes to Southern hallmarks like kudzu, honeysuckle, bickering maiden aunts, decrepit railroad tracks, sassy black maids, biscuits with maple syrup, poor white boys who look like they could have stepped out of a Confederate tintype, etc. At first, I patiently waded through these indulgent and often silly window-dressings, encouraged ever so slightly by Tartt's prose style. However, Tartt takes unforgivable advantage of her linguistic flair, so much so that the suspense totally evaporates, and the true engine of the novel (the mystery and romance of the murdered brother) essentially gets lost among innumerable, inconsequential, floridly written digressions, all of which do nothing to advance the narrative. I carried 500 pages of information around in my head, determined to sniff out clues and sleuth alongside our protagonist - only to find, in the end, that it was a futile venture.

Juli Pennock says

Review to come, I'm still a bit flabbergasted...

Killed the life out of me. Just gorgeous, I loved it. I hate the word "evocative," because it seems terribly pretentious...like "terribly pretentious" doesn't sound pretentious *at all*, jeez, but this book is that. Evocative. Powerful, deep and dark, fascinating, poetic, and just overall beautifully written.

Harriet is a firecracker, a pistol, a "trip." She's so completely herself and so completely relatable, it's almost eery. My childhood was nothing like Harriet's (maybe a little in that I spent a lot of time alone and got to where I preferred it that way), but I can remember feeling the way she feels, that anger and boredom and terror. My heart ached for her throughout the whole book.

The rest of the characters are sharply drawn, as well, except when they're meaningfully fuzzy. Allison, Charlotte, and Libby are intriguing in their weakness, their otherworldliness.

If Tartt gets a little flowery with her language (I think she does, just a bit), I feel it's justified. This is gothic, epic, real deep-down Suddenly Last Summer stuff, and it earns its flowers.

I've read a few reviews saying nothing happens. I couldn't disagree more. A LOT happens, it's just that not a

lot of it is overt; a lot happens on the inside of people. Since I've always lived in my head, I adored and related to the style of the thing.

Yeesh, and the danger! There's danger everywhere. I was so nervous the majority of the time. I was enjoying myself, drawn into the story, refusing to stop reading while simultaneously NOT wanting to read anymore, lest something (else) bad happened.

Ugh. I loved it. It was beautifully done and deep and dark and gorgeous. I need a thesaurus, whatever. Love.

Lord Beardsley says

I gave this book three stars only because of the author's ability to use mood, setting, and descriptive in an incredibly amazing way. However, this book was the biggest cocktease ever. Chekhov once said that if a gun is laying on the table in the first scene it had better be fired by the last. I firmly believe this, but Ms. Tartt seems not to. Oh well. It just seems that if you begin a book with a nine-year-old boy hanging dead from a tree, and the entire plot is driven from this, something should happen in the 555 pages of (sometimes incredibly indulgent) exposition. You'd think. Yes, she was describing class distinction and how families can be destroyed and decay, bladdy blah. I'd recommend reading *A Member of the Wedding* if you want to see that instead. But if you start a suspense novel and then morph it into a long-winded descriptive about redneck meth-heads mixed in with a coming of age story in the deep south...no! Pick a plot, please!

Another thing I have a personal pet peeve of is Black Mammy Characters. You know, at one time in history...like in the Civil War...we were incredibly limited as a culture as viewing black people as, I don't know, human. This is the 21st Century however, and despite the fact that people actually think the tv show *Weeds* is funny, it wouldn't hurt to at least try to explore the revolutionary idea that black people are human and have a vocabulary that is not limited to speaking like Jim from *Huckleberry Finn*. I hate when *white* authors attempt to write black characters by using tired phonetic spelling that is just so fucking sadly offensive it makes me embarrassed for them. Now, I realize that the character of Ida didn't at all times rely on sad cliches...she just did most of the time. That whole part about her not really giving a shit about the kids was probably pretty accurate. But seriously, Hattie McDaniel died a long time ago and I'm really not sure they'll be able to find a Black Mammy stock actor to play Ida in the made-for-tv movie (on a side note, I think that Jenna Malone is too old for Harriet, but the mental casting the author did was really dead-on). Really, the bottom line is that the world needs another faux Southern Gothic quasi-racial drama like a hole in the head. The world doesn't need anymore Mammies...that's what that bottle of Aunt Jamima maple syrup is for. Just eat some damned pancakes, enjoy your racial superiority, and quit writing cliché Mammies...PLEASE!

This book could have been great, but instead it was incredibly mediocre. I still don't think she's a bad writer, she's actually quite talented and has a real knack for creating mood...but man, learn when to fire that damned gun Ms. Tartt!

Gary says

Ponderous and immersive

This novel starts slowly and never really picks up speed. The author's ability to draw the reader into the scenes and lives of the characters, however, makes this a worthwhile read. The characters are well developed and realistic- quirky and original. Their insights into life are often fascinating and engaging.

I liked the way I simply forgot about time when the author drew me in, and although the plot moved forward slowly (even sideways sometimes) the setting and situations were lifelike and interesting enough to absorb my attention.

Yes, it's long. Yes, it could have been trimmed quite a bit. Doing so, however, would have made this book something other than what it is- an immersive and well crafted read.

Lyubov says

היא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים, והיא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים. היא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים, והיא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים. היא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים, והיא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים.

היא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים, והיא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים. היא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים, והיא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים. היא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים, והיא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים. היא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים, והיא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים.

היא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים, והיא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים. היא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים, והיא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים. היא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים, והיא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים. היא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים, והיא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים.

היא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים, והיא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים. היא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים, והיא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים. היא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים, והיא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים.

היא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים, והיא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים. היא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים, והיא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים. היא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים, והיא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים. היא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים, והיא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים.

היא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים, והיא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים. היא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים, והיא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים. היא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים, והיא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים. היא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים, והיא חשה שהיא חיה חיים אמיתיים.

Madeline says

Having read Tartt's previous book, *The Secret History*, and loved it so much I did everything except start a cult based on the characters, I expected to feel the same way about this. But I didn't.

Know why this book gets only one star?

YOU NEVER FIND OUT WHO KILLS ROBIN.

Let me just reiterate that: the mystery of who/what could have possibly been able to appear in someone's backyard, while the entire family is within hearing range and two kids are sitting on the back porch, and grab a nine year old boy and *hang him* in a tree, leaving no trace, motive, or evidence, IS NEVER SOLVED. Excuse me while I bash my head against the wall for a minute.

...

Okay, I'm back. Disregarding that highly irritating nitpick that is guaranteed to keep me awake at night, *The Little Friend* is actually a very good story. Fascinating, terrifying, complex (at times a little too complex, I must admit - the extensive cast of characters was hard to keep track of at times), morbidly engrossing, and with an ending that *refuses to tell you anything*.

Ahem. I'm fine, really. But seriously Donna: come on. I want to know who killed Robin. Know how badly? I'm tempted to start stalking you and showing up at your door in the middle of the night, demanding answers because I KNOW YOU HAVE THEM.

Here's the thing: since Donna Tartt is basically a genius (see *The Secret History*, a more wrapped-up and concentrated story, and my favorite of the two Tartt novels), I've convinced myself that she has, in fact, figured out who the killer is. Not only that, I think she reveals who the killer is through a hundred little clues and details hidden throughout the book, and we as the readers are supposed to prove our worth by locating these clues, putting them all together, and solving the mystery.

I'm sorry, Donna. I failed your test. How about this: if I come to your house and kowtow repeatedly while shrieking "I'm not worthy! I'm not worthy!" will you please, please throw a thickheaded reader a bone and *tell me who killed Robin?*

How about if I bring you chocolate?

Lauren Lastrapes says

This is such a great novel. I read it a few years ago, I think it was in 2004, I don't really remember now, but I know it was before I separated from Fabio since during the separation process I only read books by Chris Bojalian and books that Lauren mailed me. She didn't mail me *The Little Friend*, but I'm sure it is she who recommended it. Just last night, I was talking with my friend Jenna about this book (which I convinced her to read, and which she is reading now) and we were cracking up over the part where Harriet gives her Sunday School teacher the drawing of the black spot.

This is one of the most intriguing books in the history of writing. It should have won prizes, maybe it did. It's complicated but not overwhelming in its detail. It's clever without being overwrought. It's dark without making one want to be buried alive rather than finish a chapter. And it's Southern without being charming. Which is something to which I can relate.

Perry says

Prelim. Review (aka, a personal steam valve):

Well, I declare! I just don't know what Donna Tartt did to open the floodgates to venom for her last 2 novels: *The Goldfinch*, preceded by *The Little Friend*.

I say this not to gripe about your subjective opinion that you found *The Little Friend* boring, you detested the subject matter, or you simply dislike Donna Tartt's writing style or personality.

Intelligent people don't quibble over such matters, since opinions are like a__holes. I am also not claiming you are somehow misguided by animus if you gave it one or two stars "just because I thought it stunk."

On the other hand, if you based your poor rating on your opinion that the novel lacked literary merit, I kindly ask you to consider the reviews of a legion of regularly published critics (those I could find on a recent search) who almost unanimously and certainly resoundingly applauded the worthiness of *The Little Friend*.

I'll finish by offering my answers to criticism that the novel's subject matter or dialogue is unrealistic. Ms. Tartt is a couple of years older than I am, but we both grew up in small town Mississippi (for both of us, a majority of our formative years were spent in 1970s MS). I assure you that I know the characters in this novel, in a manner of speaking. Though I've never met Ms. Tartt, I've known these character traits, and feelings, and dialect and thought processes (or lack thereof), in both the young and the old. I am also very familiar with the setting, generally; yes, Mississippi has many water towers (and, btw, fire towers).

Okay. Thank you. I needed to vent a little. I'll write a full review in the near future.

Violet wells says

Donna Tartt always gives me more information than I need. Two people will be talking and you get a description of all the furniture in the room, a description of what's on TV, a description of what's going on outside the window, sometimes a memory, sometimes a dream before the dialogue is resumed. Thus it can take pages for two characters to exchange four lines of dialogue. In this novel she also gives me too many characters.

As always with Tartt it's crime that motors this novel. In particular the effect a mysterious murder has on the family of the dead boy. Harriet, the boy's younger sister, is at times a riveting portrait of troubled female adolescence. Her home life in a forsaken claustrophobic deep southern town was often brilliantly evoked. There's a compelling portrait of a black housekeeper – not the usual sentimentalised fairy godmother figure of Hollywood who adores her little white wards but a mother so pinched by poverty and exploited by the family that she has little real affection to spare.

Tartt is also a master at creating suspense. When she introduces into the narrative a born again preacher with crates of poisonous snakes the impulse is to get those pages turning quicker to reach the scene when the snakes are let loose, as we know they will be. But in this novel the denouements of the created suspense often fell a bit flat for me, sometimes straying into cartoonish melodrama. In fact the best parts of this novel were those depicting the inescapable claustrophobia and loneliness of life in an environment that has been forsaken. The high octane cinematic set pieces by comparison felt forced, superimposed. Ultimately there was a sense for me that the frame of this novel was too large for its canvas.

Phrynne says

I listened to this book on audio and would like to comment first that the narrator was excellent and gave a huge boost to the atmosphere of the Mississippi setting.

And the book had tremendous atmosphere. Donna Tartt has proven that she can set a scene with the best of them. She can also write a great character and Harriet in particular is superb. In fact another book focussing on her as a teenager or an adult would be great!

My problem stemmed from my interest in Harriet and her family. I was fascinated by them all. Once the story switched to the Ratcliff family I lost interest and became irritated when page after page was spent on irrelevant side issues to do with their unpleasant lives.

This was a long book and it took me a long time to listen to it. I liked it enough to finish it and the character of Harriet will stay with me. However it will not go down on my list of favourite books:)

Barry Pierce says

The only thing keeping this novel together is the binding.

Michael Finocchiaro says

Donna Tartt's second novel (I am working my way backwards from *The Goldfinch*). While I am still puzzled as to who is the "little friend" referred to in the title (Hely?) and the choreography of the end at the water tank was confusing, nonetheless this was an exciting page-turner and I feel that the protagonist Harriet was compelling. I loved her curiosity, her brilliance, and her spunk - she is not one to be double-crossed. The evocation of Alexandria, Mississippi reminded me greatly of my childhood in Florida.

Tartt's mastery of language and description is impressive. The dream sequence of Harriet during *The Blackbird* chapter was mesmerizing (transitioning from Scott's failed expedition to the South Pole to an Harry Houdini escape applauded by penguins) and highly memorable. The dialogs (particularly among Harriet's aunts) are also highly realistic as are her onomatopoeia such as during *The Pool Hall*:

"Crack. The balls spun apart. Odum walked to the opposite side and studied the table for several momentd. Then he popped his neck quickly, by swinging it to one side, and leaned down to make his shot." (P. 199) I felt like I was sitting at the bar (or hidden with Harriet observing the scene.

Another descriptive passage later impressed me:

"The street lamps were not yet lit; the air smelled like hedge clippings, and bug spray, and honeysuckle. Rose beds blazed magenta and carmine and Tropicana orange in the fading light." (P. 266) Again, it was like

I was on a bike next to Harriet and Hely.

Later during *The Red Gloves* when they are up on the overpass, it was like they were "Shipwrecked on a desert planet...flapping flags, military funeral for the casualties...homemade crosses in the dust. Back on the horizon, the sparse lights of an alien settlement: hostile, probably, enemies of the Federation." (P. 316)

The themes of southern memories of the Civil War and slavery, everyday racism, and the strained relationships between the prosperous (and less prosperous) whites with the subjugated blacks (notably that of the maids Odean and Ida with their respective employers) provided a realistic background to the story and reflected my own observations from living in the south. Harriet was a big reader and frequently there are references (such as "shipwrecked" above) to kids books like *Treasure Island* that added to the realism of Harriet and Hely's perspectives. There were also lots of bird images - particularly blackbirds - and knowing her next book is *The Goldfinch*, one would guess that Tartt is an avid bird lover. Another theme (which appears at the very end (no spoilers I promise) is being trapped underwater. For example, "She dreamed of black swamp water with ice in it, and country paths she had to run down again and again with a splinter in her foot from being barefoot(of swimming upward through dark lakes, knocking her head against a sheet of metal that sealed her underwater, away from the surface air" (P. 415).

And again the theme of persistent memory:

"Melancholy black drips of decay streaked the tank's facade from top to bottom - but even though it wasn't really there any more, the devil face, still it burned in Harriet's memory, like a light's afterburn in a recently darkened room." (P. 433)

So many things about the south came back to me, like this:

"They were old kitchen curtains: Danny still didn't know what Coriander was, or Mace, but he could still see the brown letters jingling along the mustard-yellow cotton (mace, nutmeg, coriander, clove) and the very names were a poem..." (P. 470)

I am nearly sure my mom had those same curtains or a tablecloth just like that.

There were dozens of moments where I remembered Vacation Bible School and Christian summer camp because they were so thoughtfully evoked.

While not a perfect book, *The Little Friend* is a great one where even the bad guy, Danny, is revealed in all his imperfect humanity and all the characters are relatively three dimensional.

I am planning to read *The Secret History* when the American Library of Paris gets it back in stock and then will impatiently wait Tartt's next book. She is truly and exceptionally gifted storyteller and I derive immense pleasure from her writing. Love Donna Tartt!

Francisco says

This is one of Tartt's earlier books published before her acclaimed *The Goldfinch*. The same complexity and richness of character, the same explosion of detail that makes *The Goldfinch* so memorable can be found in a slightly less orderly way. Less orderly in the sense that this book didn't quite have the tight narrative structure where there is little that is told that is not important to the story. This book could have lost fifty or so pages without it affecting the plot line. But who cares, really, when those extra fifty pages are fascinating in their own right. This is a story of twelve-year-old Harriet. Like most of Donna Tartt's main characters, Harriet is, well, unusual. Unusual in the kind of way we all are, if someone got to know us as deeply as the author let's us know Harriet. Harriet's life is unusual too. She is motivated by the murder of her older brother when she was just a baby and her goal in life is to find the person who killed him and avenge his death. This simple plot line takes place in a small town in Mississippi and the characters that inhabit this world are both recognizable and like no-one you've ever met before. Now and then, if you like to write, you run into books that are worth reading at least a couple of times. The first time just for the pleasure of it and the second time,

more carefully, to observe how the author pulled it off. This is one of those books. Especially if you, like me, are a fan of the omniscient narrator. You know the kind that jumps into the minds of twenty or so characters without missing a beat. When you read this kind of book you get the sense of someone conducting a one-hundred piece orchestra, of a hundred instruments losing themselves to produce one musical experience. The other thing you learn from a book like this, if you like to write, is that writing is all about the concrete, the particular, the hard atoms of life and spirit that make our world and our lives. Here's writing behind which you can detect expertise on muscle-cars, amphetamines, Houdini, revolvers, snake handling preachers (and snakes), summer camps, the Bible, the Civil War, to mention just a few. You have to be grateful for people like Tartt who give years of their lives to first acquire and then transform this expertise into an art that enriches you and me.

Tina says

I sort of want to scream when I read lukewarm reviews of this book. Admittedly, people may get the wrong idea when they read the back jacket, or the first few pages, and anticipate some sort of murder mystery thrill. The death of Harriet's brother is merely background for her character. The skill with which Tartt explores the inner workings and thought processes of a virtually abandoned 12 year old girl whose older brother's murder has never been solved cannot be praised highly enough. Tartt seems to have magically leaped over that crevasse that separates us from our youth, and from understanding the mysterious social workings of 12 year olds.

I found this book, though lengthy, to be absolutely riveting.

tee says

Currently reading this one and all I can think of is a passage from a writing-fiction manual that I read. The guy who wrote the article said that he once wrote a whole book and his publisher told him that it was good back-story, it was good for the AUTHOR to get to know his characters so when he wrote about them - they'd be 3D and real but it wasn't necessary for the readers to know most of the stuff that was written. You can remove a lot of the bulk from that first draft and keep it to yourself in your notes. Things such as the character's births, clothing preferences, favourite foods and colours, hates, loves and so on.

Tartt's work reminds me of that ... so many of the pages that are unnecessary, there's so much that could have been cut out but the thing is, I enjoy it. I really do. I wouldn't like it if every book that I read was as verbose and wandering as Tartt's, but I do so enjoy reading something like this on occasion. It reminds me of how much I enjoy language and the craft of beautiful sentence-structure, description ... how much I've always enjoyed story-telling about *people* and their surroundings.

I finished this book last night and when I read the final sentence, my mouth dropped open slightly, the book dropped from my hand onto the floor and I rolled over, squeezing my eyes shut in hopes that I would go immediately to sleep and not come on Goodreads and spew forth wtf's.

This woman knows how to write. She's great at it. But she goes frickin' NOWHERE with ANY of it. It's unbelievable! So unbelievable that I spent the entire book literally saying out loud, Oh.My.God, in reference

to her superb ability to spew forth wonderfully crafted sentences and paragraphs about nothing. NOTHING! Anyone that can write an entire book about nothing is some type of wonderbeast. Don't get me wrong, I'm not attacking her for this - I'm really just astounded at her mad skills at weaving elaborate, wandering tales.

I even thought, dude, this has to building up to some climatic ending and holy shit, if you ever get that far you will probably have the same astounded expression on your face as I did. There were so many times in this book while I was reading that I said to myself in my head: This.Lady.Is.Unfuckingbelievable. Four, five, TEN pages could pass without anything happening. YOU COULD SCRAP THESE PAGES and not know any better. Get someone to do that, get someone to rip every other ten pages out and you will never know what you have missed, plot-wise at least.

There were sooo many moments where I'd be like, dude, how is this even relevant or necessary? WHY CAN'T I STOP READING?! The entire book; waffle. Amazingly crafted prose that goes *nowhere*. I felt like I was having to force myself through some of it, even though I was interested. I just wanted things to regularly *happen* and when they didn't, I got restless. I'd measure how much I had left to go and groan. Sometimes I'd pick my book up and realise that I was holding it upside down yet I'd been staring at the page for a minute or two. Sometimes I realised I'd written a to-do list in my head, planned dinner, said the alphabet backwards and counted to 100 in French whilst having turned four or five pages. I slept, ate and drank whilst holding this book open and staring at the page through my eyelids. But at the same time, I felt this inner battle, this conflict because I was bored BUT I WAS JUST SO GOD DAMN INTERESTED. It is a massive pile of words. Tasty, heavy, Southern-saturated wordy goodness.

This entire review; waffle. Poorly constructed sentences that are trying to make a point. Something to do with too much sleep, not enough caffeine on rising. I won't be forgiven, but Tartt will.

Besides from ranting about Tartt's waffle - which another reviewer describes as this book being a 'reading experience'; a nifty way of describing it, this book really is good. You really do experience this novel. It's really nothing like any other book that I have read. The characters are the most dimensional, REAL people that I have encountered in a long time. I *felt* like I was there, I felt the heat, I heard the snakes, I almost felt like I could *touch* every part of Harriet's house. I loved the relationships between the people and the descriptions of everything.

Basically, I loved everything about this book except for the fact that nothing happened, and there's basically no resolution to any of the issues raised in the book but because of how well crafted it all is, I forgive her.

Panagiotis says

Πιασα τον μικρ? φ?λο με δι?θεση να λ?σω το μυστ?ριο της Ντ?να Ταρτ. Ποιο ακριβ?ς; Με τρ?α βιβλ?α στο ενεργητικ? της, ?λα τους ογκωδ?στατα, και με το καθ?να να μετρ? δ?κα χρ?νια συγγραφ?ς η Ταρτ ?χει φτι?ξει γ?ρω της μια ασαφ? δημιουργικ? α?ρα. Π?ραν του τιτ?νιου ?γκου τους, δεν ε?ναι ε?κολο να πει κανε?ς γιατ? χρει?στηκαν τ?σο πολ? για να γραφτο?ν αυτ? τα βιβλ?α. ?χει κ?τι το ?φος τους που παραπλαν?. Η γλ?σσα ε?ναι ?μεση και την ?δια στιγμ? περ?πλοκη - οι φρ?σεις της, συν?θως, ο?τε κοφτ?ς, ο?τε τερ?στιες, ε?ναι περιγραφικ?ς και το λεξιλ?γι? της μπορε? να συνδυ?ζει το ?μεσο και το προφορικ? με δυσε?ρετες λ?ξεις. Η Καρδερ?να, το τελευτα?ο της

βιβλίο, απασχόλησε τον λογοτεχνικό και όχι μόνο τ'πο, όσα λόγω βιβλία την χρονιά της κυκλοφορίας του.

Τελικά, τι διόλο γράφει η Ντ'να Ταρτ; Το πρώτο της βιβλίο, Η Μυστική Ιστορία, αν και με σαγηνεύσει με τις αρετές του, τελικά κάτ'φερε να με εξοργίσει με την βραδυφλεγέ πλοκή του. Η Καρδερ'να θε'ρησα πως, χωρίς να είναι το καλύτερο βιβλίο του κ'σμου -ποιο είναι άλλωστε;- ανταπεξ'λθε στις προσωπικές μου προσδοκίες και αποτ'λεσε να απ'τα πιο συμπαγ' και ενδιαφέροντα τόβλα που έχω διαβ'σει. Όμως ακόμα δεν έχω καταλάβει αν μας δουλεύει η Τ'ρτ. Μετ' απ' τον Μικρ' Φ'λο, νομίζω ε'μαι λίγο πιο κοντ' στην αλήθεια.

Κατ' αρχ'ς το βιβλίο είναι κτηνωδ'ς μεγ'λο. Εν μ'σω των τρι'ν τόβλων της Ταρτ τότο εδ' ξεχωρίζει, αγγίζοντας τις χ'λιες σελ'δες. Να τ'σο γιγντιο βιβλίο π'ντα γενν' την απορ'α στον αναγ'στη: μα τι στο καλύτερο γράφει εκεί μ'σα η συγγραφέας; Η δι'γηση ξεκιν'ει με την τριτοπ'σωπη φων' να μας ενημερώνει η Σ'ρλοτ Κλιβ θ'α χ'ει ως χ'θος ανεπ'ωτο τον θ'νατο του γιου της για 'λη της την ζω'. Αμ'σως σκ'φτηκα πως αν αυτ' είναι και το αναγνωστικ' χ'θος για τις 1000 σελ'δες του βιβλίου, περιμ'νω να με εντυπωσίσει. Γιατ' π'ως και αν το κ'νουμε να τετελεσμένο δρ'μα που θα στοιχει'σει τους ζ'ντες 'ρωες, καλύτερο είναι να μην στοιχει'σει και την αν'γνωσ' μου.

Η πρωταγων'στρια, Χ'ριετ, αδερφ' του αποθαν'ντος, αν'συχο πνε'μα, μεγαλ'νει με την καταρρακωμ'νη, πια, μ'να της, την ρομαντικ' αδερφ' της και τις χαριτωμ'νες θε'ες της. Χ'ει και 'ναν φιλαρ'κο απ' τον σχολε'ο με τον οπο'ο σκαρ'νουν διαολι'ς και παιχν'δια, π'ως 'λα τα παιδ'κια της ηλικίας του δημοτικο'. Η Ταρτ επικεντρ'νει την ιστορία της γ'ρω απ' την μικρ' Χ'ριετ. Πρ'γμα, όμως, που θα περ'σουν πολλ'ς σελ'δες για να καταλάβει ο αναγ'στης, αφο' φροντ'ζει να δημιουργ'σει τον περ'γυρ' της -τις θε'ες της, την μητ'ρα και το σπ'τι της-, μ'σα απ' λογ'ς καθημεριν' σκηνικ', λογ'ς αναμν'σεις οι οπο'ες εμφαν'ζονται απ' 'να σημείο και μετ' προς αγαν'κτησ' μου. Για πολλ'ς σελ'δες δεν γ'νεται απολ'τως τ'ποτα στο βιβλίο. Κατ' τις οπο'ες η Ταρτ συνεχ'ζει και βομβαρδ'ζει προκλητικ' με λεπτομ'ρειες.

Τελικά, 'τι κι αν 'ταν αυτ' που θε'λε να πει η Ταρτ π'αψε να χ'ει σημασ'α απ' πολλ' νωρ'ς. Τα προβλ'ματα που δημιουργ' το μέγεθος του βιβλίου, με την πυκν'τητα των περιγραφ'ν και των πλατειασμ'ν, είναι μοιρα'α. Μ'χρι την σελ'δα 500, το μ'νο ενδιαφέρον πρ'γμα που χ'ει συμβε' είναι η παρακολο'θηση εν'ς αλητ'μπουρα που αυτ' μάζ' με τον φ'λο της υποπτε'ονται για τον θ'νατο του αδερφ' της (δ'κα χρ'νια πριν). Εγ' απορ' υπ' το β'ρος ποιας δι'νοιας κάτ'φερε η Ταρτ να επιβ'λλει την 'κδοση του βιβλίου της σε αυτ'ν την μορφ', αποφε'γοντας μια σοβαρ' επιμ'λεια; 'ταν μ'λις το δε'τερ' της μυθιστ'ρημα και φαντ'ζομαι πως 'τι επιτυχ'α κι αν ε'χε το πρώτο της (Η Μυστική Ιστορία) τότο εδ' θα τρ'μαζε μ'χρι και τον πιο καλύτερο εκδ'τη με τις χ'λιες σελ'δες του.

Θα σκεφτε' κανε'ς ε'λογα «μα τ'ποτα δεν είναι καλύτερο σε αυτ' το βιβλίο;» Επειδ', πρ'γματι, μια καταξιωμ'νη συγγραφέας είναι λογικ' να χ'ει 'στω 'να-δυο καλύτερα πρ'γματα να πει, 'στυσ'α το κέφ'λι μου να τα βρω: 'σως, με μπ'λικη καλύτερη π'στη, κ'ποιος να εντοπ'σει μ'σα στις ατ'λειωτες σελ'δες του το βιβλίο που θα μπορο'σε να είναι αν 'πεφτε 'να γερ' ψαλ'δισμα: μια αφήγηση που μεταφ'ρει τον αναγ'στη στην προεφηβικ' ηλικία, με την ματι' εκείνη που μαθα'νει να ερμηνεύει 'ναν εν'λικο κ'σμο άλλ' ακόμα χωρ'ει το παραμ'θι μ'σα του. Χωρ'ει κι η αγαν'κτηση για τις αδικ'ες που μαθα'νουμε αργ'τερα να καταπ'νουμε. Α, ναι. Κ'που στις τελευτα'ες σελ'δες 'ρχεται και 'να ασαφ'ς επιμ'θιο για τους κινδ'νους της αυτοδικ'ας. Αυτ'.

Ξ'ρω, όμως, πως υπ'ρχουν πολλο' που ακόμα και τ'ρα θα θεωρ'σουν αδικ'α το 'να αστερ'κι. Θα

σκεφτε? κ?νεις πως ε?ναι ?δικη αυτ? η ολοκληρωτικ? απ?ρριψη του βιβλ?ου, πως αρμ?ζει μ?νο σε ευτελ?, κακογραμμ?να κε?μενα ερασιτεχνικ?ς και ατ?λαντης π?νας. Εγ?, ?μως, ξ?ρω πως με τον ?γκο και την φλυαρ?α του με γον?τισε, οι αναγνωστικ?ς μου ?ρες μαζ? του ?ταν απ? τις πιο ανυπ?φορες που θυμ?μαι, καθ?ς στην θ?α των αμ?τητων σελ?δων που με περ?μεναν συχν? δι?βαζα διαγ?νια με μια λ?σσα να διασχ?σω την θ?λασσα απ? φλυαρ?ες της Ταρτ. Για αυτ?ν την παρατυπ?α στην οπο?α εξ?θησα τον εαυτ? μου, εγ? ο τ?σο συνεπ?ς αναγν?στης, δεν θα συγχωρ?σω την Ταρτ.

Maxwell says

Well, that was a huge disappointment. I had heard this was generally the least loved of Donna Tartt's novels, but I went into it expecting to like it a bit more than most because I adore her work. But no, sadly this was a big letdown. Overall this book just left me very confused. How did she go from such an atmospheric, well-written novel as *The Secret History* to this? And then to come up with the masterpiece, *The Goldfinch*? I just don't get how she is the same author of this book.

The writing isn't bad, it's just not nearly to the caliber of her other novels. And you know those people, maybe friends or co-workers, who tell these long-winded stories and when they finish speaking, you're left going, "...that's it?" That basically sums up my feelings about this book. The whole time I was waiting for the story to arrive at some point where I could go, "OH!! Yeah! Wow!" and it would be redeemed. Sadly, it did not.

A 1 star seems a bit harsh, because I suppose within the 555 pages there were some moments that kept me reading and interested. Though by the end I was SO over it, I just wanted to be done and know what happens. But even that didn't satisfy me enough to make it better. I'm really bummed because now I've read all 3 of her novels that are published, and I probably have to wait like 9 more years for another one. And this one didn't live up to the excellence of her other books. Ah well, at least I have *The Goldfinch* to appreciate.

Annet says

Part one: while reading it...

This is what you call a 'slow read'. It is impossible to race thru these pages. That is why I had two prior unsuccessful attempts to read this book. An impatient mood is not a good mindset to read this one. But I loved *The Secret History* and I just know that Donna Tartt is a good writer. You just have to have quiet time on your hands to read this one. So I'm taking my time with this one and it's rewarding. The descriptions Donna Tartt uses are long and sometimes it takes pages and nothing really happens. But, as another reviewer said, boy, does Donna Tartt know how to write, even though nothing much really happens. How she describes persons, surroundings, history, landscape. It's something you have to take in slowly, taking in all the words in slowly. So I read this book when the weather is good, outside in the garden, like this weekend. It doesn't really work to read this book before going to sleep, I just don't take in the words as I should. I have come to accept that the storyline is slow. I love sitting down and reading pages & pages about the brothers Ratliff, about the aunts of Harriet, about the brokendown parts of the town.... it's beautiful writing. I'm around page 257 today, halfway thru, so I expect it will take some more time to finish this one.

Part two: after having read it:

December: I finished *The Little Friend*! Summer has gone and winter is here... and I did take time. Part of the reason being that I got this one as a very heavy hardcover, so while travelling, I just don't take it with me. And while travelling, I read the most. And at some point, I just concluded I needed this book besides my bed, to read a couple of pages every day, slow and taking in all the detail. I can imagine that some people feel betrayed because of the beginning intriguing plot and then how this book progresses, but I have to say... I really don't care. I loved this book, the style, the characters, the story, the southern atmosphere. All of it. Sure I would have secretly liked to see a clear ending and a solution to the mystery, but at some point I saw it coming that this one was gonna be different. When I finally got through the first say one fourth one third of the book I started immensely enjoying this book. Donna Tartt is a great, talented writer. How great is it to get into the mind of a child growing up fast and describe it in such amazing detail! Four stars. I gave *Secret History* five, because I think that story on the whole was just a bit better than this one. Already looking forward to the next book of Donna Tartt. And I really have to reread the *Secret History*. Take your time with this one and enjoy it!

Robin says

A Southern tale set in small town Mississippi shows the wreckage left behind after a beloved son, grandson, and brother, Robin, is murdered in his own front yard. Evoking a little of Scout Finch, and a little of Flavia de Luce (child sleuth from Alan Bradley's books), Harriet Cleve Dufresnes decides to solve her big brother's unresolved death. Despite her innocence and youth, Harriet is deadly serious and doesn't mess around. This isn't a 'cute' story despite its childish heroine.

There's so much I adore about this book. The setting: circa 1970's when kids didn't know what screens were for the most part, Southern U.S. with dilapidated old plantation houses with names such as "Tribulation". The people: a collection of doting, aging great-aunties, a pre-teen boy who will do anything to impress his girl pal, and a gruff housekeeper who smells like love.

Like her other two books, this one is lengthy, but is blessed with the same incredible storytelling I've come to expect from Tartt. She delves into the mindset of a twelve year old girl so well, illuminating lingering racial and class prejudices, and the brokenness of her family. Harriet's life reaches a turning point; she is forced to grow up during this pivotal summer.

Despite the length, I flew through it. I couldn't help myself!! I was all in. The characters are fascinating and rich. The mystery is spellbinding. And, of course, the **snakes**. They were far scarier than the white trash meth heads. I was gasping aloud during many scenes. Eeeeeeeeeeeek. Hissssssssss. How do people in Mississippi walk around? I think I'd need to be sedated in order to go out of doors.

A few things were more than a little odd - the cover with the creepy old doll head - WHY? I noted the reference to one of the auntie's dolls, but it was such a minuscule detail, it doesn't make sense to adorn the cover of such a fantastically rich novel with *that*. The other thing: the title. Again, I saw the reference, made by Dixon Dufresnes at the very end, but it just seemed off. I wonder if Ms. Tartt had any say in either of these decisions.

The only thing I'm unhappy with at the end of this engrossing coming-of-age story, is that I've run out of books to read by Donna Tartt. And I don't want to wait until 2024 for the next one!
