



Sacred Time

Ursula Hegi

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The bestselling author of *Stones from the River* delivers her most ambitious and dramatic novel yet -- the unforgettable story of an endearing, but also flawed, Italian American family.

In December 1953 Anthony Amedeo's world is nested in his Bronx neighborhood, his parents' Studebaker, the Paradise Theater, Yankee Stadium -- and in his imagination, where he longs for a stencil kit to decorate the windows like all the other kids on his street. Instead he gets a very different present: his uncle Malcolm's family.

Malcolm is in jail for stealing -- once again -- from his last new job, and Anthony's aunt and twin cousins settle into the Amedeos' fifth-floor walk-up. Sharing a room with girls is excruciating for Anthony, despite his affinity for the twins. But the real change in Anthony's life comes one evening when he causes the unthinkable to happen, changing each family member's life forever.

Evoking all the plenty and optimism of postwar America, *Sacred Time* spans three generations, taking us from the Bronx of the 1950s to contemporary Brooklyn. Keenly observing the dark side of family as well as its gracefulness, Hegi has outdone herself with this captivating novel about childhood's tenderness and the landscape of loneliness. Ultimately she reveals how the transforming power of a singular event can reverberate through a family for generations. With gravity and poise, Hegi turns her astute yet forgiving eye on the essential frailty and dignity of the human condition in this elegant and fast-paced novel.

Sacred Time Details

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Author : Ursula Hegi

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From Reader Review Sacred Time for online ebook

Amy says

Sacred Time was a good book - good character development and believable characters. I really enjoyed how the book was told from different points of view. I do like this style of writing. This allows me to have a better understanding of each character, and have much more empathy for them as well.

I would have liked Floria's point of view at the end of the book to have been shorter...it seemed to go on and on, while Anthony's pov seemed way to short. Otherwise, a good book. I would also have liked to read Victor's pov, and had more time with Belinda, and perhaps even Bianca.

Jessica says

I liked the plot and the characters in general, but the event around which this novel is built didn't ring true to me. The way the family handled it was deftly drawn and painfully believable, but the event itself wasn't developed enough to seem like something that would have been done by the family member who did it. So the center didn't hold, though the rest was quite well done.

Carol says

I am giving this one 3 stars, because I liked the story but a lot of it was kind of slow for me. The different chapters from the various characters' perspectives made it interesting. I also liked how the writer took me through time, over a span of 50 years.

Cristin says

Since I loved Stones from the River so much, I thought I might enjoy another Hegi book. It took me a long time to make my way past the beginning of this book. While I enjoyed the stories of family, and was moved by the pain of carrying secrets, I found this book a bit too heavy and slow at times. Hegi is poetic and philosophical, with some beautiful scenes, but it was not my favorite.

Mike Davis says

Hegi is a highly rated author and I picked this book up while browsing in a used book store. It follows an Italian family through roughly three generations and is well written, gritty in places, with Hegi's run-on thoughts in places and great character development. Having said that, I'm not sure the point of the novel aside from the treatment of family secrets and guilt. A good book, but not a great one and certainly worth reading for Hegi fans.

Landismom says

I literally could not remember what this book was about while I was reading it. Every time I picked it up, I thought, "what is this about again?" I enjoyed it while I was reading it, but barely retained anything about the book.

Good writing, but not a compelling story, and the title doesn't make a ton of sense.

Michael says

Rich, satisfying saga of two Italian American families spanning the period from the Bronx in the 50's to post-9/11 Brooklyn. Hegi is a genius in evoking the perceptual and emotional world of her vivid characters, the power of their secret pleasures and pains, and their bonds in love and loss. Her prose is captivating and often poetic. She plumbs well the resilience of families to surmount challenges they are all subject to. Her major concern here is with the recovery of the accidental loss of a child from the perspective, as well as with the intergenerational impact of physical abuse. Despite this dark subject, the book is life affirming throughout and infused with charm and humor.

Becky says

Hegi has a great way with words -- especially stream-of-consciousness type words. Her stuff is really hard to beat in terms of character development and general flow of the story. I particularly liked how she began with "Anthony's" story, went through the stories of the women in his life, and then ended again with his story. This "full-circle" writing is my favorite kind of story-telling.

So why only three stars? My main complaint (and call me a prude, if you must) was the excess of SEX in this book. I am always irritated by the portrayal of every woman in a book as sex-crazed kittens who have stronger libidos than the men they are with. This book is no exception -- every female character in it is obsessed with sex. While this may be the norm in Ms. Hegi's circle, it doesn't seem like a realistic portrayal of the average women I know.

Terri says

Ursula Hegi is hands down my favorite author. She has this way of writing where you feel as if you are going through everything right along with the characters. You feel their pain, joy, fear, with them. I don't think I have ever read a book written by her where I did not cry. This one was no exception. This book takes you through the complex family dynamics of an Italian family after they suffer a horrendous tragedy. You glimpse into how each member deals differently with grief and guilt for the role they played. You see the impact it has on those around them. This author is so skilled at describing human emotions you sometimes

feel as though you are reading someones private diary. Her fictional characters feel so real that you swear they will call you up for a cup of coffee one day just to ask how you enjoyed their story, breathtaking.

Lady-R says

Historia de una familia italoamericana a lo largo de los años y cómo algunos de ellos han ido afrontando la vida tras un hecho dramático.

En algunos momentos pensaba que se me iba a hacer larga, pero en otros entraba tremendamente en la historia.

Una historia muy cercana, de sentimientos, miedos, lazos, amor, pasión, en la que es fácil identificarse.

Catherine says

Sacred Time is the story of an extended Italian-American family told in 3 distinct periods of time. In the first section, which takes place in the 1950s, a horrific tragedy takes place. The second portion of the book takes place in the 1970s, and the third and final section in the early 2000s. Each section has two separate chapters told through the perspective of two main characters.

There were portions of this book that I really liked. I felt the first section, set in the 1950s, was by far the strongest. I felt transported back in time; the author's description of the era was exceptionally strong. The storyline was also compelling and I couldn't put the book down.

The following 2 sections were weaker for me, and I didn't necessarily feel a strong connection between each section. Yes, the family tragedy is present in all 3 sections, but I didn't feel it was a factor in moving the story forward, nor was it developed all that well.

A strength is the emotions that the author portrays for the characters. I was tearful while reading a chapter where a major character is facing imminent death. For anyone who has been present while a loved one was dying, you'll know that this author was spot-on in her depiction of this situation.

Overall a pretty good book.

Brooke says

I listened to it and started off loving it and wondering how it could get anything less than 4+ stars as it's rating. The characters were strong, the story was rich... and then it crashed, or maybe just spiraled, or better yet, slumped. It seemed that as the story progressed and the narrators changed, it got more depressing and "dweily" to the point where I just couldn't wait for the dang thing to be over. Too bad the author lost her voice to the dark side because I felt her writing was rich, even if her story wasn't.

Kaethe Schwehn says

Toward the end of this novel one of the characters says "I suspect what continues to harm long beyond the act of violence in the silence." The act of violence happens early in the story and so the majority of the book is about how the characters live inside their own silences after the event--and how the silence changes each of them differently. The characters are rich and distinct and though we witness them moving forward in time, plot is not the engine that drives the book. If you're a plot/action reader, this probably isn't the novel for you. But if you're interested in the nature of grief--how it changes people differently, how it morphs over time--then you will find this to be a stunning and rewarding read.

Melissa says

The story opens in an Italian neighborhood in the Bronx in the 1950s. Our narrator is a young boy named Anthony who is frustrated when his cousins and aunt move into his cramped apartment over the holidays. The story morphs into something new as our narrator changes to Anthony's mother and then to his aunt Leonora, then his cousin. The book covers three time periods as well; first the '50s, then the '70s, and finally the early 2000s.

We watch as the family grows and changes over the course of those decades. We see how a single event can resonate throughout the lives involved. Each of the stories ties the whole picture together, giving a wide and wonderful look at what makes a family a family. How we are able to both hurt and help each other so much more when we are connected by blood.

I really enjoyed every second of this book. It's not that the story itself is particularly startling; it's that the characters are so beautifully drawn. They feel like they could be people from our own families. They struggle with the same hurts and unhappiness and guilt that plague us all from time to time.

BOTTOM LINE: What begins as a simple coming-of-age story quickly becomes a powerful look at family dynamics. I'm so glad I stumbled upon this one and I will be searching out more work from this author.

p.s. I listened to the audio version and it was excellent!

"Some days being sure only meant you had to double check, because if you didn't, everything else would come undone."

Sharon says

This story which takes place from the 1953 to 2002 explores how one incident alters the lives of the members of a large Italian family in the Bronx. The many characters are interesting and quirky as they each try to come to grips with the problems in their lives.
