



Triangle

Katharine Weber

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

Triangle

Katharine Weber

Triangle Katharine Weber

Esther Gottesfeld is the last living survivor of the notorious 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist fire and has told her story countless times in the span of her lifetime. Even so, her death at the age of 106 leaves unanswered many questions about what happened that fateful day. How did she manage to survive the fire when at least 146 workers, most of them women, her sister and fiance among them, burned or jumped to their deaths from the sweatshop inferno? Are the discrepancies in her various accounts over the years just ordinary human fallacy, or is there a hidden story in Esther's recollections of that terrible day? Esther's granddaughter Rebecca Gottesfeld, with her partner George Botkin, an ingenious composer, seek to unravel the facts of the matter while Ruth Zion, a zealous feminist historian of the fire, bores in on them with her own mole-like agenda. A brilliant, haunting novel about one of the most terrible tragedies in early-twentieth-century America, "Triangle "forces us to consider how we tell our stories, how we hear them, and how history is forged from unverifiable truths.

Triangle Details

Date : Published June 13th 2006 by Farrar Straus Giroux

ISBN : 9780374281427

Author : Katharine Weber

Format : Hardcover 242 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Fiction, New York, Book Club, Adult

 [Download Triangle ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Triangle ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Triangle Katharine Weber

From Reader Review Triangle for online ebook

Becky says

Katharine Weber's central story of the 1911 tragic fire in the Triangle Shirtwaist factory has SO much potential...but, the end product just doesn't hold together for me. Esther Gottesfields, an immigrant and factory worker who survives the fire, is a sympathetic and interesting central character. The social-economic conditions are vivid and dramatic. What goes wrong? The author fractures her story between the grand daughter (who searches for the fire story,) her husband (who obsesses over his academic music career), and then the most awful, unprofessional "feminist" academic card board character who sees everything as power point and career enhancement. The later character was aggressive, abusive, self centered, and unbelievably unprofessional -- "oh, by the way I'm taping this...that is ok, isn't it?" It seemed to me the author couldn't develop the story beyond the basic idea (a great one), so used a lot of filler.

Bonnie Brody says

Usually I know right where I'm going when I write a review but this book has me a bit stymied because of its thematic content. It is brilliant and beautifully written, literate and musical at the same time. It tackles great themes and does it subtly yet with a great strength. It is one of the finest books I've ever read.

The story is about the Triangle Factory fire which was, prior to 9/11, the worst tragedy that ever befell New York. One hundred forty-six men, women and children were killed in a fire that occurred in a sweat shop on the lower east side of Manhattan. This fire helped spur unions to grow and protect workers. Had there been exits available when the fire occurred, almost all of the deaths could have been prevented. As the story opens, Esther Gottesfeld is 106 years old, the oldest survivor of the 1911 tragedy. It is shortly after 9/11 and the two events are synchronous in the story-telling. Esther is being interviewed by an arrogant feminist scholar, Ruth Zion, who is trying to find out information about the fire and pry secrets out of Esther. Esther is too wise and cagey for Ruth Zion to get very far.

The story is also about Esther's granddaughter, Rebecca, who lives with George Botkin, the most famous composer of contemporary U.S. music. He writes music about DNA strands, chemistry, echinacea, and Huntington's Disease (which he may have inherited). His music is loved by a wide audience.

The story weaves back and forth in time and between characters. The strongest parts of the book are those about Esther while the most original parts of the book are about George and Rebecca. There are secrets to be found out and secrets to be kept. One fascinating theme in the book is the connections between the Triangle Fire, 9/11, and music - another triangle. We find out that Rebecca and George share similar DNA strands. For two people very much in love, this seems serendipitous but also sweet.

The ending of this book is dreamlike and written in stream of consciousness. I could not come up for air as its beauty swept me with it like a tide. The last 40 pages are as beautiful as anything I've ever read. I highly recommend this book.

Lois says

I absolutely loved this book and keep recommending it to anyone who loves to learn about history through story. The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory and the fire that killed so many women is not exactly up there in history classes with the wars, kings and blah de blah public schools keep feeding our children. Its time and place and workers come alive in this book. (a sadly eerie affect for me too while reading it was the strange mirror of the women jumping/stepping out of the 7th and 8th floor windows to fall to their deaths rather than be burnt alive, reflected in the images of people doing the same from the Twin Towers on 9/11.)

There is the equally important contemporary story, as well, of the survivor of the fire, her niece, and her niece's partner, who is the rather genius musician. We see the fragility and strength of human memory, which is never separate from our emotions, desires, our grief and our hopes. Live long enough, and memory becomes a web, rewoven if broken, perhaps seeming to look different to the eye but made from the same silk as the original experience. It can also be woven by another through compassion, empathy, anger or loss into music.

The metaphors of triangles throughout the book was delightful. And I have to tell you, I was compelled to go online after reading "Triangle" not only to look up more info on the original fire, but to look up Serpinski triangles -- and guess what? There are sites online that actually play music (that computer generated stuff!) based on Serpinski triangles. At least it gave me a notion (however digital) of what math might sound like.

Caroline says

I am still completely under the spell of this book -- it kept me up past one in the morning because I couldn't put it down until I had finished reading. The novel introduces us to Rebecca Gottesfeld, her partner, the composer George Botkin, and Rebecca's grandmother Esther, the last living survivor of the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire. As we follow their lives in New York City over the late summer and fall of 2001, we are also often plunged into the past as we hear, over and over, Esther's account of the fire -- which was, until 9/11, New York's most devastating workplace disaster: we read Esther's courtroom testimony, transcripts of her interviews with a scholar researching the fire, and the story she has told Rebecca and George. As we read, we discover slight inconsistencies in Esther's story and start to realize they they might not just be the result of an elderly woman's faulty memory. It is a tightly-woven novel that knits together the three individual stories and the two huge disasters in a delicate and haunting piece of writing.

Graceann says

The Triangle Shirtwaist Fire of 1911 is an endlessly fascinating subject to mine for literature (fiction and non). There are lots of unknowns there, and plenty to be angry about. There's also the fact that, when you consider the creation of less expensive clothing, what happened in a little building in New York is by no means an event of the past. Just go to Bangladesh to visit the crumbling buildings where the young ladies work away at the Primark "bargains" to see what I mean.

But this book isn't about that; well, not really. One character is a survivor of the Fire. She's the last survivor, as a matter of fact. If it were just about her, I would have found it to be a satisfying read. Heavens knows there's enough meat on that bone to keep any novelist happy. What we get instead is a sort of meditation on music theory, mystery and intimacy that, for me, didn't quite gel.

George is a composer who has unusual inspirations for his masterpieces. He and Rebecca meet thanks to the scheming of their respective elderly relatives and form a relationship that works for them, though nobody else understands it, apparently. When Rebecca's grandmother, the last survivor of the Triangle Fire, passes away, the mystery begins.

Part of my disappointment with Triangle is that I determined what the secret was before Rebecca's grandmother passed. Then toward the end of the book, another mystery is sort of trotted out but not resolved. So, not only was there a "mystery" that wasn't a mystery, but there was a loose end that nobody bothered to weave in. Both frustrating, if in different ways. There were also lengthy segues into the creation of pieces of music that simply didn't interest me and, until the end of the book really didn't fit into the story as a whole.

Finally, there was a character I actively loathed and this person kept popping up at various points, just when I was getting used to the rhythms of the more intelligent members of the ensemble. I'm not sure if they were meant to be comic relief, a villain, or just another bit of interesting story, but I just prayed they would go away soon whenever they appeared.

All in all, a bit disappointing. There were glints of the story I was hoping to read, but they were all too infrequent.

Janet says

An unfortunate waste of a great idea. In 1911, a garment sweatshop burned, killing over 100 people. The premise of this book is a good one--what is the true memory of the last survivor of that tragedy, and what really happened that day, and why. There are distracting subplots--one about a composer who writes music based on science could have been a good book on it's own. The dialog is stilted and at times cutesy, but all the parts that are interviews with the survivor, or her recounting her memories, are good.

Kathryn says

This book had so much promise - a historical event, a secret, a consideration of how history is remembered and reinterpreted according to people's personal agendas - but it was just not good. No, the parts about the Triangle fire were great, mostly because the event itself is so compelling, but all the subplots were so, so tiresome. It seemed as if the author had chosen a project that she wasn't skilled enough to complete, so she skipped over all the hardest-to-write parts and tried to write around them with a bunch of cutesy dialog. If you spend most of the book writing in the pluperfect - summarizing all the things that have happened because you don't know how to write them happening in real time - the parts that you do put in the present have to be really good. But they were just painfully stupid conversations about the least important aspects of the story and all the big revelations and reactions and thinking were done offstage. Plus, the secret is easily guessed from, well, the dedication page, but all the details surrounding the secret are left as loose ends because the big reveal is supposed to be enough. It isn't. I should have just read a non-fiction book about the fire.

Paula says

The author cleverly brings together a work of historical fiction, a unique theory of music composition, and the story of a contemporary relationship. The historical fiction centers around the notorious 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire and the personal story of its oldest survivor and her recollection of the horrendous conditions of the workers who were primarily immigrants. There's a mystery surrounding the circumstances of her survival which unfolds as the story of her granddaughter and her relationship with a brilliant musician develops. Playing into the mix of characters is a caricature of a driven feminist historian and her own research about the fire. An interesting read for sure. Thanks for the loan of the book, Marilyn.

Liza says

I first learned about the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in my women's studies class my freshman year of college. I saw this book on the shelf and pulled it off in the hopes that it might center around this event, and it did, but it did so much more. Not only did this give an incredibly vivid account of what it must have been like to work in the factory and also be in the fire, but it also described life as an immigrant, a worker with no rights, and a woman living around the turn of the century. I also loved Rebecca's partner, George--though normally subplots like that have me bored and skimming, I was mesmerized by George and how he composes. I found myself enjoying those parts as much as the parts about the fire.

If that wasn't enough, Weber makes this into a mystery--as her grandmother's account of the fire has some holes in it. This was a great, quick read. Recommend it highly.

Jerry Delaney says

The novel is based on the Triangle Shirtwaist factory fire in 1911 in which 146 people died, mostly young immigrant women. The chapters dealing with the fire were superb and i was also caught up in the story of one survivor's granddaughter and the granddauhter's husband. But wile George's musical theories were interesting, they belonged in a different book. Here, they were too much of a distraction, being completely peripheral to the main story. I'm really sorry that the feminist historian was a caricature rather than a real person. I know that academics are ripe for parody and I have no problem with that. But does any scholar actually use the term "herstory"? This character abandoned reality to become a silly cartoon and that detracted from my enjoyment of the novel. Esther's big secret was pretty obvious early on, but that wasn't really an impediment to enjoying the book. All in all, the book is worth reading, but i wish it had lived up to its potential.

Kressel Housman says

When historical fiction is done well, it's my favorite genre, but when an author takes too many liberties with the facts, it really gets on my nerves. This author not only invented fictional victims of the Triangle Fire, she tried to pull off a surprise ending, and frankly, I just didn't get it. The only reason I'm giving the book 2 stars instead of the hated 1 is that the characters were compelling enough to keep me reading till the end. The "herstorian" (feminist historian) was especially, albeit hatefully, well done.

If you want to learn about the Triangle Fire, don't bother with this book. Instead I recommend *Triangle: The Fire That Changed America* by David von Drehle. Why try and learn history through fiction when you can read a real history that's as gripping as a novel?

Sterlingcindysu says

A great story in such compact writing. There's really 2 stories, the one about the Triangle Shirtwaist fire, which I really don't know much about, and the other about the composer who creates music based on DNA-- I think that could have been a stand alone novel by itself. So much research, not just on the fire and music, but also Yiddish, Huntingdon's disease, etc. I kept thinking, I need to look up this word, but I didn't want to stop reading. Perhaps I'm slow, but when Esther repeats her testimony over and over, it wasn't until near the end that I saw the discrepancies.

The only thing that didn't make sense to me was when the researcher left the cat out on the windowsill, perhaps I was missing something or it was just to break up the tension. Cute cover, the idea that you're "unbuttoning" the truth (or buttoning it up depending how you look at it.)

(spoiler) I think the reason why Pauline took the money was payback for being raped, not for her testimony.

(copied review) Esther Gottesfeld is the last living survivor of the notorious 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist fire and has told her story countless times in the span of her lifetime. Even so, her death at the age of 106 leaves unanswered many questions about what happened that fateful day. How did she manage to survive the fire when at least 146 workers, most of them women, her sister and fiancé among them, burned or jumped to their deaths from the sweatshop inferno? Are the discrepancies in her various accounts over the years just ordinary human fallacy, or is there a hidden story in Esther's recollections of that terrible day? Esther's granddaughter Rebecca Gottesfeld, with her partner George Botkin, an ingenious composer, seek to unravel the facts of the matter while Ruth Zion, a zealous feminist historian of the fire, bores in on them with her own mole-like agenda. A brilliant, haunting novel about one of the most terrible tragedies in early twentieth-century America, *Triangle* forces us to consider how we tell our stories, how we hear them, and how history is forged from unverifiable truths. Wrote *The Music Lesson*

Jennifer says

This book had so much potential, but didn't live up to it for me.

Esther is the last living survivor of the 1911 Triangle factory fire. How did she manage to survive on a day when so many others died, including her twin sister, Pauline, and her fiance, Sam? Ruth, a feminist historian, is determined to take a thorough and accurate oral history. She senses that Esther isn't being consistent and is determined to find out why, through repeated interviews.

If the book had just been those interviews and Esther's story, I would have loved it. It was riveting. Unfortunately, there's a second storyline that deals with Rebecca, Esther's granddaughter, and the work that Rebecca's husband does (he's a composer whose music is based on formulations found in nature, especially genetic codes). This part dragged. I was so anxious to get back to what felt like the real meat of the story.

There's a difficult and delicate balance to find when alternating narratives like this, and this book just didn't have that necessary balance for me. But the parts dealing with Esther were compelling, and I would recommend those to interested readers.

skein says

I've always had a soft spot in my heart for stories of avoidable disaster, and the Triangle Factory fire in 1911 was nothing if not avoidable. Many that's why I liked this? It is something like a conceptual novel - and the writing almost always falls flat under the weight of One Good Idea - but not in this case. There *is* a large amount of repetition - the same long story is told at least five separate times - but the plot (such as it is.) centers - rotates - around memory and loss and grief and love, and each time we read the story again, it has a different meaning - because the truth, as we know it, has changed in some way. (Or look on it as post-traumatic-stress-disorder: the mind re-visiting the scene of a trauma.)

And this is a terrible review - I can't just describe this accurately without giving it away. But just like with *The Little Women*, also by Weber & which I happened to read on the same day as *Triangle*, I enjoyed this far more than a meagre three stars - but maybe I just *like* repetitive slow-moving stories with a trace of mystery that center around easily avoidable disasters which affected a disproportionate amount of poor young immigrant women in the early 20th century and the present-day research methodology that falls into Feminist Pits as it attempts to understand the intersection of memory on past and present, please add something about conceptual music. - But my enjoyment doesn't necessarily have much to do with how good the book is. And I must be true to the star honor rating!

(Okay, it's how-to-predict-disaster-time: don't give the fire department ladders that go up to the top of the building! Hmm, but wasn't that because the ladders were too heavy (at that length) to be stable? Those poor immigrant girls. Grrls. Women. Womyn.)

Elaine says

This is the centennial of the Triangle Shirtwaist fire so it seemed fitting to find this book at the library. It was the memory of the fire that kept me reading too, because the first chapters almost made me give up on the book. One of the main characters is a composer, and the chapter about him seemed to have the sole purpose of showing off the author's knowledge about music. Likewise with the chapter about another main character, a geneticist -- and again, we learn that the author knows lots about genetics. More than we need to know. But then we get into the meat of the story -- Esther's story, a centenarian who is the last survivor of the Triangle fire. She is the grandmother of Rebecca, the geneticist, whose boyfriend is the composer. A feminist historian is trying to wring some hidden truths from Esther to complete her new book on the fire. Here the author takes us through Esther's version(s) of the fire, from an ILGWU pamphlet, from the transcript of the trial of the owners of the factory (they were acquitted of any malfeasance, though 146 workers perished in the fire), from her multiple interviews with the historian. Slowly, we get to know who Esther is and all she has been through. The final chapters -- where we return to music and memory -- are riveting, so I am glad I stuck with it.
