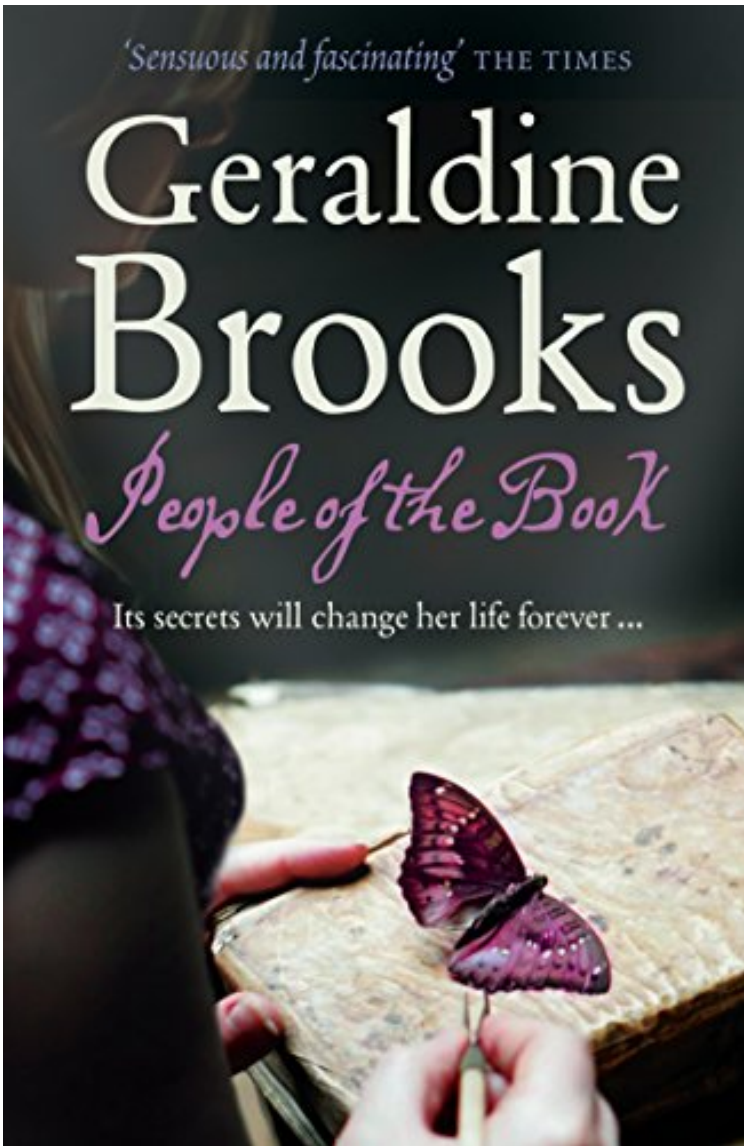


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People of the Book



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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurA novel from the author of March and Year of Wonders takes place in the aftermath of the Bosnian War, as a young book conservator arrives in Sarajevo to restore a lost treasure. When Hannah Heath gets a call in the middle of the night in her Sydney home about a precious medieval manuscript which has been recovered from the smouldering ruins of wartorn Sarajevo, she knows she is on the brink of the experience of a lifetime. A renowned book conservator, she must now make her way to Bosnia to start work on restoring The Sarajevo Haggadah, a Jewish prayer book to discover its secrets and piece together the story of its miraculous survival. But the trip will also set in motion a series of events that threaten to rock Hannahs orderly life, including her encounter with Ozren Karamen, the young librarian who risked his life to

save the book. As meticulously researched as all of Brooks's previous work, *People of the Book* is a gripping and moving novel about war, art, love and survival. *Best of the Month, January 2008*: One of the earliest Jewish religious volumes to be illuminated with images, the Sarajevo Haggadah survived centuries of purges and wars thanks to people of all faiths who risked their lives to safeguard it. Geraldine Brooks, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *March*, has turned the intriguing but sparsely detailed history of this precious volume into an emotionally rich, thrilling fictionalization that retraces its turbulent journey. In the hands of Hanna Heath, an impassioned rare-book expert restoring the manuscript in 1996 Sarajevo, it yields clues to its guardians and whereabouts: an insect wing, a wine stain, salt crystals, and a white hair. While readers experience crucial moments in the book's history through a series of fascinating, fleshed-out short stories, Hanna pursues its secrets scientifically, and finds that some interests will still risk everything in the name of protecting this treasure. A complex love story, thrilling mystery, vivid history lesson, and celebration of the enduring power of ideas, *People of the Book* will surely be hailed as one of the best of 2008. --Mari Malcolm

From *Publishers Weekly* Reading Geraldine Brooks's remarkable debut novel, *Year of Wonders*, or more recently *March*, which won the Pulitzer Prize, it would be easy to forget that she grew up in Australia and worked as a journalist. Now in her dazzling new novel, *People of the Book*, Brooks allows both her native land and current events to play a larger role while still continuing to mine the historical material that speaks so ardently to her imagination. Late one night in the city of Sydney, Hanna Heath, a rare book conservator, gets a phone call. The Sarajevo Haggadah, which disappeared during the siege in 1992, has been found, and Hanna has been invited by the U.N. to report on its condition. Missing documents and art works (as Dan Brown and Lev Grossman, among others, have demonstrated) are endlessly appealing, and from this inviting premise Brooks spins her story in two directions. In the present, we follow the resolutely independent Hanna through her thrilling first encounter with the beautifully illustrated codex and her discovery of the tiny signs—a white hair, an insect wing, missing clasps, a drop of salt, a wine stain—that will help her to discover its provenance. Along with the book she also meets its savior, a Muslim librarian named Karaman. Their romance offers both predictable pleasures and genuine surprises, as does the other main relationship in Hanna's life: her fraught connection with her mother. In the other strand of the narrative we learn, moving backward through time, how the codex came to be lost and found, and made. From the opening section, set in Sarajevo in 1940, to the final section, set in Seville in 1480, these narratives show Brooks writing at her very best. With equal authority she depicts the struggles of a young girl to escape the Nazis, a duel of wits between an inquisitor and a rabbi living in the Venice ghetto, and a girl's passionate relationship with her mistress in a harem. Like the illustrations in the Haggadah, each of these sections transports the reader to a fully realized, vividly peopled world. And each gives a glimpse of both the long history of anti-Semitism and of the struggle of women toward the independence that Hanna, despite her mother's lectures, tends to take for granted. Brooks is too good a novelist to belabor her political messages, but her depiction of the Haggadah bringing together Jews, Christians and Muslims could not be more timely. Her gift for storytelling, happily, is timeless. Copyright 2007 Publishers Weekly.