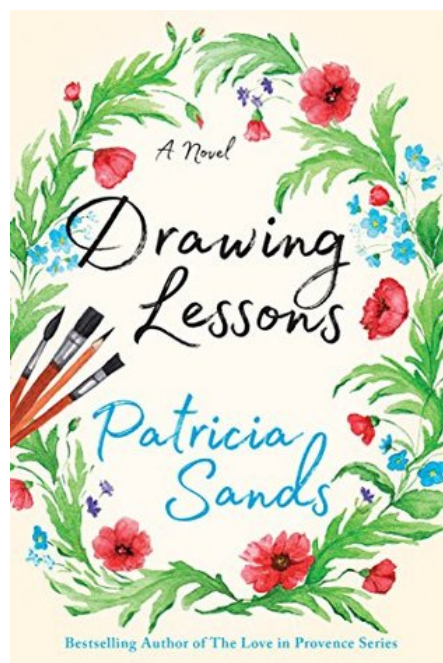




Drawing Lessons

Patricia Sands

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The author of the Love in Provence series returns to the South of France with a poignant portrait of a woman who must learn how to create a new life for herself...

Sixty-two-year-old Arianna arrives in the South of France for a two-week artists' workshop full of anticipation but burdened by guilt. Back home in Toronto, she has been living with the devastating diagnosis of her husband's dementia and the heartbreak of watching the man she has loved for decades slip away before her eyes. What does her future hold without Ben? Before her is a blank canvas.

Encouraged by her family to take some time for herself, she has traveled to Arles to set up her easel in the same fields of poppies and sunflowers that inspired Van Gogh. Gradually, she rediscovers the inner artist she abandoned long ago. Drawing strength from the warm companionship and gentle wisdom of her fellow artists at the retreat—as well as the vitality of guest lecturer Jacques de Villeneuve, an artist and a cowboy—Arianna searches her heart for permission to embrace the life in front of her and, like the sunflowers, once again face the light.

Drawing Lessons Details

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From Reader Review Drawing Lessons for online ebook

Barb Taub says

What do you do after your happily-ever-after? Arianna Papadoupoulos-Miller has already had the great love of her life. She and her beloved husband Ben raised their children, welcomed their grandchildren, and worked hard to make their family restaurant a success. Just as they're poised to reap the rewards of all that, they receive devastating news. Ben is diagnosed with a rapidly deteriorating form of dementia that robs him of his memories and leaves him in a vegetative state with nothing left of the person he'd once been. Arianna is left in limbo—not yet a widow, but without the love that formed the center of her life and her identification—she's also lost so much of her identity that she retreats to a shell where the only emotion she allows herself is grief.

But the family that she and Ben had nurtured refuses to let her life end with her husband's decline. They encourage her to turn back to an earlier love, the art career she'd abandoned decades earlier when she joined Ben in running their restaurant. Reluctantly she agrees to apply for attendance at a two-week art workshop in Arles, France, chosen because of its association with her art idol, Van Gogh, but also because she and Ben had never been there and so she would be making new memories.

But despite her brave attempt, Arianna finds herself closed off from the art she'd once loved, consumed by grief, but also by shame and anger. She's prepared to give up on the course and return home. As she hesitates, the other workshop students and artists reach out to her. But just as much, she finds that the setting—with its beautiful old towns, history, culture, and especially its food and scenery—reaches out directly to her soul. Like the sunflowers that turn incrementally to face the sun, she slowly and reluctantly opens to possibilities and even to love.

Drawing Lessons is a book that takes on difficult subjects. Is it right to embrace new experiences, visit new places, take up new passions, when your old life is still unresolved? Does romance belong to older women? Can new love—beautiful, romantic, love in all its fragile beauty—be right when the husband you've loved for four decades is still alive?

Starting with scenes showing what Arianna has lost—the love and support of the man who knows her better than anyone else—Drawing Lessons sets a deliberately slow and careful pace. As family traditions and normal life disappear, Arianna's world becomes a sterile place. Friends, companionship, even the Thanksgiving dinner they all loved are abandoned.

What I loved about Drawing Lessons is the way Arianna is seduced back to life by the beauty of the French countryside, the stimulation of the food, the other students, and slowly, incrementally, her art.

[QUOTE] “Fields exploded with the bright colors of purple-pink valerian, yellow broom, and red poppies, lending an almost festive air to the landscape. She inhaled the colors, already planning her painting. How could she not?” [END QUOTE]

Their workshop is visited by Jacques de Vileneuve, a famous artist who also invites them to be his guests and experience his other passion, as gardian (cowboy) in the Camargue river delta preserves. I enjoyed learning about the Camargue, with its iconic Camarguais white horses, colorful flamingos, famous bulls, and the gardians' traditional life. It was easy to see how Arianna would be captivated by the setting, and especially by Jacques. But I also loved the well-developed three dimensional characters of her fellow students. They are a diverse group whose mutual reservations about each other slowly gell into true friendship over shared meals, experiences, and art.

Drawing Lessons is a different kind of love story. But if you like romance with complex, believable, mature characters in a gorgeous setting—plus great food!—I highly recommend it. I just have to warn you that you'll be VERY hungry by the time you're done.

I received this book from the publisher or author to facilitate an honest review. This does not affect my opinion of the book or the content of my review.

Rebecca says

62 year old woman's (Arianna) life changed drastically when husband (Ben) was diagnosed with dementia.

"Art is to console those who are broken by life." - Vincent Van Gogh

Twice, Arianna and Ben's lives were rocked to the core. The first time was over 20 years ago when Arianna's father, Nikos, was killed in a car accident forcing Ben to take over the family's Greek bistro and Arianna to quit her art historian job to help. The second time was in the present when Ben was diagnosed with Pick's Disease, or frontotemporal dementia (FTD).

Arianna cared for Ben until he became unaware of his surroundings and no longer remembered her or their children, Faith and Tadeus (Tad). As a respite from reality, Arianna embarked on a solo trip to the South of France and took drawing lessons hoping to reignite her passion for art. What better place to do that than where Vincent Van Gogh lived and painted? While there, will she find herself again?

Vincent Van Gogh's *The Starry Night*:

Much to my surprise, there was a snippet of history about Buffalo Bill, his visit to France, and his grave site in Golden, Colorado which I visited this past summer with my son and friends!

I am a sucker for books about artists, and this one was no exception! I had to stop reading many times so I could look up photos of locations mentioned, or Van Gogh's paintings. Upon completion, I am left feeling inspired to create art of my own, and/or to visit France ... or hopefully BOTH in tandem, just like Arianna!

Town Square Fountain/Obelisk in Arles, France:

Thank you to the author, the publisher, and NetGalley for a free advance copy of this book! All opinions are my own.

"And perhaps we are all [broken] in one way or another. Maybe that's why we are all here. Maybe that's why we want to draw and paint and create." - Jacques to Arianna

Location: (1) Greektown in Toronto, Canada, (2) Lesvos, Greece, and (3) the South of France

Marla says

Patricia Sands writes beautiful stories that transport the reader to the Provence area of France. She knows how to make the area part of the story. The group of artists who spend two weeks together was a very hodgepodge of personalities who got along great. I enjoyed learning a lot about the area. What I had a hard time with was two people barely knowing each other and one changes their life because of this short encounter. I just don't believe stuff like that happens. I know it's fiction but it felt rushed at the end. Other than that, anything by Patricia Sands is enjoyable.

Alyssa says

I've read Ms. Sands' book Promise of Provence and quite enjoyed it, so I was excited to be able to read and review Drawing Lessons as well. Her descriptions of France and of her characters are so vivid that I find it quite easy to bring them all to life in my mind. Of course, it also makes me wish I could be there with them! In this case, in Arles, creating art.

I really felt for Arianna in this novel as Ms. Sands skilfully took me through her everyday life, and the difficulties and sadness that she was experiencing. I wanted to reach through the pages and hug her. Dementia of a loved one is a tough challenge to meet, especially when it progresses to the point that your loved one remembers little to nothing of their family and friends.

This book was on the quieter, introspective side, and it was just what I was looking for.

Elizabeth of Silver's Reviews says

Arianna and Ben had the perfect life...childhood sweethearts, family-owned business, and most importantly each other.

Their perfect life was shattered when Ben was diagnosed with dementia at a young age. As the disease progressed, it became more and more difficult to cope with the illness to the point of Arianna's children worrying that they were going to lose her too.

The children booked their mother a trip back to her beloved France where she had spent a month or so during college. The trip was for two weeks at an art retreat to try to take her mind off of the stress of Ben and her loss of him even though he was still living.

Arianna met wonderful people at the art retreat, but would the trip and the time away help her to realize she is alone and must learn to cope with the loneliness?

DRAWING LESSONS has absolutely marvelous descriptions that put you right into the story and into France soaking in the landscape and drooling over all the delicious-sounding food.

The characters were ones that would be great to be with. They all had their quirks as well as their endearing qualities that made the group well-rounded and enjoyable as companions.

If you enjoy traveling, reading about France's beautiful landscapes and life of the French people, French artists especially Vincent Van Gogh, making new friends, and helping another person to feel welcome and overcome a problem, then DRAWING LESSONS will be an enjoyable read for you.

DRAWING LESSONS was a beautiful, heartfelt story about truly examining your life for the pleasures you have enjoyed and the pleasures you need to look for and experience. 4/5

This book was given to me free of charge and without compensation by the author in return for an honest review. All opinions are my own.

May Cunerty says

Although I missed the cast of characters from the Provence series, this new novel from Patricia Sands did not disappoint. I thoroughly enjoyed following Arianna along her journey of recovery and renewal. Once again, the author's writing makes us feel that we are enjoying the spectacular countryside and food along with the characters. Every person in the book has a story and there is something to relate to in every one. I found myself thinking of them long after the book had ended. Once again, a great pick for a book club - lots of relevant issues to debate!

Laura says

First, let me make a confession... I am a book "gobbler". I read super fast, generally only needing a day or so to read a book the size of Drawing Lessons by Patricia Sands. However, THIS book is the literary version of a wonderful 7 course meal, prepared to perfection, with every little bit of it a delight to savor! Patricia's wonderful imagery and detail forced me to slow down and really enjoy every bite of this beautiful book. Additionally, the struggles that Arianna, the main character, experiences resonated deeply with things that are going on in my life (and, I would assume, the lives of many of my baby boomer compatriots). Patricia's perfectly articulated descriptions of Arianna's thought processes as she worked through the issues she is facing rang very true to life. All of this, coupled with a cast of interesting characters, interesting descriptions of the life of Vincent van Gogh and the history of the region near Arles, France, combine to provide a reading experience that made me feel like I had been on a two week vacation myself! I'm not going to spoil the story by going into more detail than that, but I thoroughly enjoyed this book. Bravo, Patricia!

I was provided an ARC by NetGalley and Lake Union Publishing. The opinions expressed here are completely my own and without influence.

Linda Zagon says

MY REVIEW OF "DRAWING LESSONS" by Patricia Sands

I just had an emotional journey as I finish "Drawing Lessons" by Patricia Sands. The genres of this novel are Fiction and Women's Fiction, with a touch of Romance.

The story takes place in Canada and in the South of France, where the author provides a detailed view of the

gorgeous colorful landscape and scenery, and provides a sensory image of the feel, taste, touch, smell and sights of the region. It is a perfect place for an artist or painter to enjoy the spectacular views. The timeline of the story is in the present.

The characters are described as sensitive, creative, loving, and caring. The situations that the characters face are complicated, complex and distressing. Ariana faces each day as if looking at a blank canvas, and sees everything in black, gray and white. Ariana, now 62 once had the passion to be an artist. As she watches her beloved husband Ben, slip into the cruel world of dementia, Ariana hopelessly stands by. Her family encourages Ariana to go to the Southern part of France, and found herself through Art.

Ariana does meet new friends, and has new experiences, and as the short time passes is in the process of creating and accepting a new life for herself.

I appreciate that the author describes dementia, and how devastating at first it is to the patient, and family members. How incredibly frustrating and sad it is to see the person you love physically be present, but no longer emotionally aware, I also love the way the author discusses the importance of family support, friends, love, and hope. I also like the way the author describes individual growth and acceptance to live life. I would recommend this story for readers who look to see the positive in life, when there is negative. I received a copy of this ARC for my honest review.

Mary says

I received an ARC in exchange for my honest opinion. Reading this book was an emotional experience for me. I am dealing with a loved one, my mother, and dementia. When I first began reading I almost had to put it aside, it really affected me. But I kept on. I'm really glad I did. Well written, with amazing characters and scenery and food, all so well done I could see it, smell it, taste it. This is a wonderful book filled with so much information about art, the Camargue horses, the idyllic way of life in this lovely town. The love story while predictable, was sweet and really well done. This book was inspiring, gave me hope, and yes, peace. It was also nice to see an older couple having a shot at happiness. It made me long for the lush French countryside (as I imagine it, anyway, I've never been) And as soon as I finished, I ordered some salt from Camargue. Yes, I did.

Becky says

I received this book as an advance copy to provide an honest review.

I thought I had read that there was something about Van Gogh in this book.....I have been a huge Van Gogh fan for many years & while that made me look forward to read the book, I had no idea how much or how little a part he was in this story.

The book is mostly about Arianna, a 60+ woman who lives a lovely life, has a wonderful marriage, family etc, something sad is happening in her life & her family sends her off on a trip to get back to her art interests & to take some much needed time for herself. She goes to the South of France, to Arles, & attends an artists retreat, in the heart of where Van Gogh once lived.

The story is truly picturesque. The visualization is just breathtaking & beautiful. I felt I could smell the flowers & taste the food.

We meet the rest of the people on this retreat & we learn a little about each of them, but the parts I loved best

were the descriptions of the area, the food, the towns people & the history of the area & then add Van Gogh into it all & I just loved it!

I have never highlighted so many words, places, & sayings in any book before.

This was my first book by Patricia Sands, but I look forward to reading many more by her!

I did receive an advance copy from NetGalley & the Great Thought's Ninja Review Team. All opinions are my own.

Andrea Stoeckel says

(I received a copy of the title from the publisher for purpose of honest review. I was not compensated for this review: all conclusions are my own responsibility)

Read 9/23-10/3 review postponed until 10/12 as part of FranceBookTour

(I recieved this advanced copy from NetGalley and voluntarily chose to review it.)

“The gifts we give each other at Thanksgiving are priceless,” Ben reminded Arianna now. “The best kind—love, laughter, and lots of delicious things to eat.”

Ben and Arianna have been part of a wonderful community, running a welcoming family restaurant and raising a multi generational family.

And then, Ben is slapped with a terminal diagnosis. And the world changes as Arianna steps forward to become the head of her family. Watching Ben deteriorate by inches as he retreats into himself is devastating. Her family and friends are supportive but this is a trail Arianna must forge herself.

Coming across a travel opportunity she joins a group of artists varied in their experience but all converging in Provence to learn more about van Gough and have some interesting experiences most tourists don't get. Each participant brings their own lives with them, and adds to the bouillabaisse of the splendid table. Arianna becomes stronger and more open as her life begins to reopen. Every day of the trip is a reminder that life goes on, and it's Fall can be as wonderful as its Spring. But for that to happen, her closed in soul must find its own way back to the “...love, laughter and good things to eat”

This is a story about the invasion of an impending death and how it affects the rest of life. It is a hopeful understanding of an attempt at mindfulness and the courage to “soldier on”. However, it is a lovely saying “goodbye” to your love and turning towards a hope filled future.

As a minister and elder advocate, I applaud Ms.Sands treats these subjects with tenderness. Having read almost everything she has written, I am in awe of the mirror she holds up to the human psyche. I cried my way through the beginning of this well researched situation, and cried my way through the long goodbye that ends it. The tears in the middle were sweet and full of life, color and life. This is a book to be cherished. 5+ Stars and a spot on my list of the best books of 2017.

Amy says

A few months back I read Sands Love in Provence series and absolutely loved it, she creates realistic characters in the most beautiful settings dealing with the same type of issues and problems that many of us can relate to on some level. She takes the reader on a poignant and emotional journey that is just a gorgeous

experience.

I adored her protagonist Katherine from LIP and was hoping I would have another strong connection to Arianna and I totally did! I love that Sands has heroines that are not in their twenties, they're more mature and worldly bringing a sophistication to the story. Arianna's situation was heart wrenching, dementia is a devastating disease and I had so much sympathy for her. When she takes a chance and heads to the artists retreat she begins a journey of personal growth and self introspection that was amazing. The rest of the people at the retreat are eclectic and interesting, they added an additional layer of depth to the story.

Sands truly brings a setting to life, from the mouthwatering, scrumptious food descriptions to the stunning landscapes she paints the prettiest picture with her prose. There was a strong, rich sense of history of Arles that was fascinating, I'm not a history buff or remotely artistic by any means but it was compelling and I definitely learned a few new things. This was a bittersweet read with plenty of life lessons and inspiration, a really positive and lovely tale.

All of my reviews can be found on www.novelgossip.com

Letty says

What do you do when life throws you a curve ball that you didn't see coming and just shatters your world into pieces? That is what happens to Arianna when her husband is diagnosed with frontal lobe dementia. Devastated and heartbroken as she sees what the disease is doing to her husband that she can no longer care for and who no longer recognizes her, she decides, with her family's encouragement, to go to Arles, France for a two-week art course. I loved what her daughter Faith says to her at the airport, "Let the sadness go, Mama. Let it go. Reach for that light in Provence." It isn't easy for her to let that sadness go right away but once she is there in Arles, she meets an amazing group of people in the art course that in their own ways help her in rediscovering not only her love and talent for art but also to live and enjoy life to its fullest.

I loved the characters in this books, and the vivid descriptions of the setting and food in France made me feel I was right there experiencing it with them. One of my favorite parts in the book was when they were stuck indoors because of a mistral and they decide to cook a meal together. They laughed and danced to music by the Gypsy Kings (a favorite group of mine) while prepping and cooking and just had a marvelous time together. I was happy for Arianna and her time there in France as she seemed to be getting some much needed emotional healing. The writing is beautifully done, and I let out a big sigh when I finished the book. I actually did not want it to end as I wanted to continue on in Arianna's journey.

This is the first book by Patricia Sands that I have read and it will certainly not be my last. Her writing is just superb. I highly recommend this beautiful book.

I received an advance review copy of this book from the Great Thought's Ninja Review Team through NetGalley. All opinions are my own.

Carol Boyer says

This richly beautiful book - I savored every page, it filled my heart with things I love, art, and a poignant story of finding oneself anew through grief. There are magnificent descriptions of Arles, France, and the Camargue, the horses, the culture, the azure to pink 'water rose' sunsets of the Mediterranean not to mention

all the food choices of cheese, wine, deserts mignardises and the incredible passages about Van Gogh. Arinana is torn with guilt leaving her husband Ben who has dementia, to attend a two week artists workshop but she knows this is a chance of a lifetime. I felt her sorrow yet loved her strength to follow her heart with her families blessings. She finds a symbiotic companionship with Jacques de Villeneuve. He is an artist who helps her re-find her passion of sketching, drawing painting, in the beauty of this country, and in sailing with him to Cote Bleue. I loved this quote by Araina - "This is my reality today. My moments of happiness. By choice." Thanks to the author, publisher, the Ninja Review Team and Net Galley for letting me read this outstanding book. I truly loved it and highly recommend it as a book you want to stay with and not have it end.

Liza Perrat says

When Arianna's beloved husband, Ben develops dementia, she decides to leave Canada and take part in an art retreat in France, in an effort to quell her grief and to rekindle her interest and talent for art.

She joins a very eclectic group of artists from all over the world, each of them aiming to improve their craft. And, like Arianna, each of them with their own reasons for travelling to this stunning region, south of Arles. Together, they support and encourage each other, form friendships, coax out hard-to-share stories.

Besides the opportunity to meet some memorable, strong and very human characters, I loved the way the author wove the story around the magnificent landscape, the fauna and flora, as well as the incredible historical, cultural and architectural aspects of this region; the same beautiful buildings and scenery that Van Gogh once painted. And, of course, the usual plethora of gourmet French food and wines.

Drawing Lessons is a story to lose oneself in; an emotional but wonderful escapade to the Camargue region in France as we accompany Arianna on her journey from grief to joy. Highly recommended for all Francophiles!
