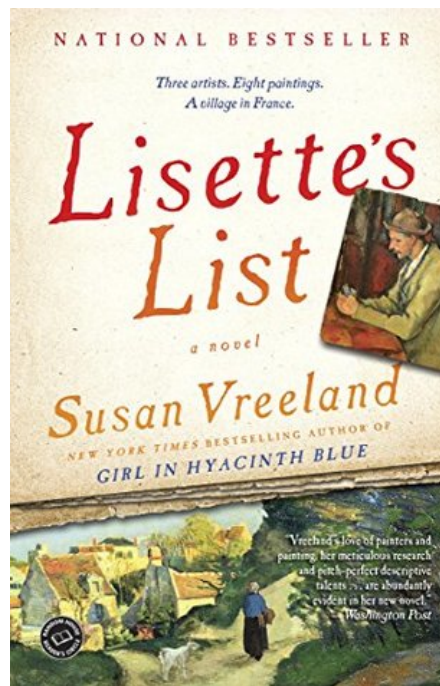




Lisette's List

Susan Vreeland

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From Susan Vreeland, bestselling author of such acclaimed novels as *Girl in Hyacinth Blue*, *Luncheon of the Boating Party*, and *Clara and Mr. Tiffany*, comes a richly imagined story of a woman's awakening in the south of Vichy France—to the power of art, to the beauty of provincial life, and to love in the midst of war.

In 1937, young Lisette Roux and her husband, André, move from Paris to a village in Provence to care for André's grandfather Pascal. Lisette regrets having to give up her dream of becoming a gallery apprentice and longs for the comforts and sophistication of Paris. But as she soon discovers, the hilltop town is rich with unexpected pleasures.

Pascal once worked in the nearby ochre mines and later became a pigment salesman and frame maker; while selling his pigments in Paris, he befriended Pissarro and Cézanne, some of whose paintings he received in trade for his frames. Pascal begins to tutor Lisette in both art and life, allowing her to see his small collection of paintings and the Provençal landscape itself in a new light. Inspired by Pascal's advice to "Do the important things first," Lisette begins a list of vows to herself (#4. Learn what makes a painting great). When war breaks out, André goes off to the front, but not before hiding Pascal's paintings to keep them from the Nazis' reach.

With German forces spreading across Europe, the sudden fall of Paris, and the rise of Vichy France, Lisette sets out to locate the paintings (#11. Find the paintings in my lifetime). Her search takes her through the stunning French countryside, where she befriends Marc and Bella Chagall, who are in hiding before their flight to America, and acquaints her with the land, her neighbors, and even herself in ways she never dreamed possible. Through joy and tragedy, occupation and liberation, small acts of kindness and great acts of courage, Lisette learns to forgive the past, to live robustly, and to love again.

Lisette's List Details

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From Reader Review Lisette's List for online ebook

Meg - A Bookish Affair says

4.5 stars. "Lisette's List" is the latest release by the fabulous historical fiction author, Susan Vreeland. Vreeland is definitely on my list of authors whose books I'm definitely going to want to get my hands on it as soon as I can whenever they come out. I very much liked some of her other releases and believe that "Lisette's List" is a very good follow-on to her other works. In this book, Lisette left the glittering world of Paris behind in order to go with her husband to a small French town in order to care for his ailing or maybe not so ailing grandfather. At first, Lisette really doesn't want to be in that small town; however, a mystery and some very warm and wonderful townspeople make her feel like the small town could become home.

I really enjoy when a historical fiction book includes some art. As with some of Vreeland's other books, art plays a heavy hand here. Lisette's husband's grandfather, Pascal, has a mystery for Lisette to solve that revolves around some of the world's greatest paintings that may be in danger with the invasion of the Germans. I loved this mystery and I loved all of the adventures that it created for the storyline. It definitely made this book very exciting to me.

The characters in the book are fabulous. Lisette is definitely an interesting character and she felt very real to me. She definitely kept me wanting to read to find out what would happen to her next. Lisette had very clear career goals and is disheartened when her and her husband's move to this small French town takes her away from her hopes of running her own art gallery. Lisette also comes across some famous characters in her adventures including the famous artist Marc Chagall.

This is a fantastic story with a lot of great historical detail. I also liked how the author was able to create a sense of warmth in the little French town. I really felt that it really helped me to get into the story. This book will definitely thrill previous fans of Vreeland's work and hopefully find her some new fans as well!

Chrissie says

ETA: I feel I need to clarify what exactly I found "too cute". What I found too cute was the fictional story crafted by the author, of course not the historical events. In no way is WW2 cute. In addition I found the historical events, although not inaccurate, without depth. So much more could have been said!

OK, dear friends, do you want the truth? Friends recommended this book to me, and I don't want to hurt any feelings, but this book did not work for me at all. By the end I absolutely hated it. For me to give it anything other than one star is a total lie.

Why it failed me is extremely simple. It is too damn cute for me.

It is about art, the art of Chagall and Pissarro and Cezanne and about the value/meaning of art. Art is personal and I do not want to be told how to think. The whole discussion of art was, for my taste, oversimplified. There is an afterword that details how the author modified the known paintings to fit the novel.

This is primarily a book of fiction. Other than the three named artists, the characters were all fictional. The

fictional story, what is that about? Romance and mystery. The time setting is WW2 and the mystery element is the disappearance of famed artwork. Were they stolen to be sold to the Germans? Who is a collaborator and who isn't? Maybe I have read too many non-fiction books on WW2 to be satisfied with this fictional presentation.

I did enjoy the author's depiction of both Roussillon, in Provence, and Paris. She captured the magnetism, the beauty and the unique atmosphere of both. I love both Roussillon and Paris; both are very special to me personally. I appreciated that the author acknowledged how one can come to love and feel at home in more than one place on this earth. Nevertheless, I cannot give an additional star because on concluding the book I felt I really disliked it.

I have zero complaints with the audiobook's narration by Kim Bubbs. Delightful French.

Angela M says

As a little girl in the orphanage in Paris, Lisette's love of art is born as she looks at a painting of the Madonna and Child. "How a human being, not a god, could re-create reality so accurately, how the deep blue of her cloak and the rich red of her dress could put me, a young orphan without a sou to her name in touch with all that is fine and noble, how such beauty could stir something in me so deep that must have been what Sister Marie Pierre called soul – such things drenched me with wonder," So begins Lisette's love affair with art.

I was at the start drawn into the story by the loving relationship of Lisette and Andre and then by the beautiful descriptions of the lazy, lovely, little town of Roussillon in the south of France, where this young couple come to live in 1937. They have left Paris with all of its excitement and promise and art, to stay with Pascal, Andre's aged grandfather and in doing so have left their work - Andre as a carver of frames and Lisette, the possibility of becoming a gallery apprentice.

The town is quiet and beautiful and the days for Lisette are filled with cleaning and cooking, but most importantly listening to Pascal's stories about the 7 paintings he owns and his relationship with the painters - Pissarro, Cezanne. Time passes and the war begins; everything has changed for Lisette and she finds herself alone, but yet in love with the town and people who come to love her.

I feel as if I had an education in art and I loved my teachers - Pascal, Lisette, Maxime, Chagall, yes Marc Chagall. The descriptions of the paintings were so perfect that you could close your eyes and see them before you. I loved these characters - Lisette, Maurice, Maxime and didn't want to leave them.

The story is about more than the paintings, though. It is about life and death, the strengths of people during times of adversity, about war and the deepest bonds of friendship, about the resilience of people and about love.

Encouraged by Pascal, Lisette writes a list of things she must do, "Lisette's List of Hungers and Vows" grows at each change and turn in her life as she adds to the list over the years and works to accomplish all of them. To include that list here would be to tell Lisette's story and that is something I would recommend you do by reading this book.

Thanks to Random House Publishing Group and NetGalley.

Stephanie says

Fall in love with this novel of late 1930's Provence!

Suffused with the colors of Provence in the late thirties to forties, *Lisette's List* tells the enchanting, sometimes deeply sad and always moving story of a young Parisian girl Lisette who agrees reluctantly to move to the south of France with her husband to live with his weakening grandfather. The old Pascal has stories to tell of his memories of Pissarro and Cézanne, both of whom he knew; he also has five gorgeous paintings to leave them. But when the Nazis overrun France and Pascal dies, the husband André hides the paintings to avoid their confiscation from the enemy and goes off to war with his best friend not even telling Lisette where he has hidden them. She finds herself alone but for close neighbors and faces dangerous trials when the Nazis do arrive. During all this time she makes a somewhat haphazard list of things she feels she must accomplish. Her struggles over the list with its matters small, great and impossible, lead the book; they include finding the paintings, her husband, and helping his best friend.

Written with great nuance and tender observations of smallest things — from unraveling a sweater to gather wool for socks, a sensitive goat, the color of apples, the making of a stew from little — the author draws character with a fine brush. *Lisette's List* will make you cry and smile and wonder when you look up (so real is the writing) why you do not find yourself in a farmhouse in Roussillon across the table from a charming, principled young woman who is making her list and determined, though she cannot know how, to fulfill all its promises.

This may be Susan Vreeland's finest novel. Buy it!

Sandie says

Sue Vreeland's *LISETTE'S LIST* is essentially written on two levels and while it does an admirable job in recounting certain aspects of WWII as well as presenting an art history lesson focusing on the fate of paintings by Pissarro, Cezanne, Picasso and Chagall during the German occupation of France it is not as effective in fulfilling expectations in the areas of plot intensity nor in character motivation and development.

Lisette, the title character, is a Parisian girl raised in a Catholic orphanage where she experiences the beginnings of her appreciation of art. After her marriage to Andre she reluctantly relocates to his home town in Provence in 1937 in order to provide care for his elderly grandfather Pascal, a man who has accumulated several works by the aforementioned masters. Pascal's reminiscence concerning his acquisition of the various works becomes part and parcel of the story.

With the outbreak of WWII and the Nazi occupation of France, Andre enlists in the military, but not before hiding his grandfather's precious paintings and Lisette is left to try to assimilate into a town where some view her as an outsider who resists their culture and provincial ways while a handful of others befriend her.

In the ensuing years Lisette overcomes many obstacles and the reader is invited to follow along as she copes with everything from Nazi's looking for Pascal's paintings to the unwelcome advances of a local townsman to learning how to make cheese, all the while bent on determining the location of the missing paintings.

When one takes a step back and considers the overall story, it is obvious that this book succeeds less effectively as well plotted work of historical fiction than it does as a primer into the history and interpretation of certain works of modern masters and their use of ochre pigments within those works.

As a long standing fan of Sue Vreeland, I am sorry to admit that this is not one of my favorites.

Fred Shaw says

What makes this historical novel so unique from all others I've read, is the inclusion of the artists Pissarro, Cezanne, Chagall and Picasso, and the stories of their work, subjects and family. Around this storyline is wrapped the account of two Parisians, Lisette and Andre, who travel South from Paris to the village of Roussillons, to care for Andre's grandfather, Pascal. Pascal's health is failing and wants to share with Andre his life's anecdotes as an ochre pigment salesman and his relationships with Pissarro and Cezanne. Pascal also has original Pissarro, Cezanne and Picasso paintings hanging on his walls in his humble home. Amidst all this, Nazi Germany's has invaded France and is attempting to move the world's art establishments of Paris to Berlin.

I had a lot of fun reading Lisette's List, learning about and researching the artists, and the area of Provence where the ochre pigments are mined. Not only is this story captivating but is filled with touches of both country and Parisian cuisine and traditions.

"What makes a painting great - its power to enrich us with truth, to enlighten us so that we understand our lives more clearly."

Well done Susan Vreeland! I highly recommend it!

Stephanie Renee says

I received an Advanced Readers Copy of this novel. Lisette's List was a thoughtful and moving read for me, with a scene mid-book that touched on the universal, giving me reason for pause and deep contemplation, what all great literature strives for. Vreeland's mastery of language and descriptive images are on every page. The first word that comes to mind after reading the book: Exquisite. I loved Vreeland's characterization of Parisian and Provençal life, along with learning about Marc Chagall and his wife's plight and his thoughts on the effects of war on art and artists and culture. Throughout the novel I enjoyed the reflections and explanations of art materials and works and the meanings behind paintings such as Picasso's "Guernica" and "Weeping Woman". For anyone who appreciates vivid settings, specific time period details, characters and writing with soul and heart and a focus on art, you'll love and revel in this novel. With gorgeous prose, as in "She seemed an angel, guiding me with wings of steel." Once again, Vreeland has created an important story, one written as finely as a Pissarro painting, but in the rich colors of Cezanne's palette. Book clubs, start making the marzipan and heating up the crème cafe, there's a lot to explore and discuss in Lisette's List.

Rebecca Foster says

“When a man finds a place he loves, he can endure the unspeakable.” Vreeland writes pleasant books based around artists and paintings; years ago I enjoyed her *Girl in Hyacinth Blue* and *The Passion of Artemisia*. In this latest novel, Lisette Roux and her woodcarver husband, André, move from Paris to the small village of Roussillon, Provence in 1937 to care for his ailing grandfather, Pascal. It’s a tough adjustment for Lisette, a socialite and aspiring gallery assistant.

Pascal, who sold paints and frames, has memories of meeting many of the greats, such as Pissarro and Cézanne. Now, with war approaching and her husband off to the front, Lisette is tasked with safeguarding Pascal’s art collection from the Nazis. She meets some famous figures of her own: Samuel Beckett makes a cameo appearance and Marc Chagall and his wife Bella – who as Russian Jews were taking refuge in the countryside – have a more major role.

It’s always interesting to see how Vreeland will weave in historical figures and both real and imagined paintings. The novel brings to life the privations of wartime France: Lisette uses an outhouse (lovingly crafted by André), lives by the products of her pet goat and chicken, and spends hours deriving colors to use to dye her marzipan fruits for sale.

However, Vreeland is sometimes too heavy-handed with the historical details, such as explaining the rules of boules, the process of mining ochre, and the Parisian fashions of the 1940s. Both the mystery of the paintings’ whereabouts and a later love triangle felt predictable and overwrought, though I did sympathize with Lisette. I wanted her titular ‘list’ to be a bit more consequential, *à la* Schindler’s; instead, it’s little more than a set of banal New Year’s resolutions.

Related reading: The Paris vs. Provence setup makes this ideal for fans of Peter Mayle. From what I’ve heard, the plot – retrieving beloved artworks from the Nazis in France – is very similar to *The Girl You Left Behind* by Jojo Moyes. For a novel set in wartime Paris, you can hardly do better than *All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr.

Charly says

Vreeland is simply a wonderful writer who can take a painting or in this case several paintings, and weave a marvelous story that holds you from page one to the end. In this she is masterful in her character development, and she runs this development parallel and intertwined as the story requires.

This is a love story on many levels and deals as well with promises and obligations made and kept even beyond the life of one of the parties. Her characters are gems as well. This novel is wrapped around WWII and the aftermath.

This is another one where you should do yourself a favor and pick it up if you haven't already.

Coincidentally I was dealing with this and Corelli's *Mandolin* as an overlap and it was interesting to see the similarities of the locales featured.

Sally says

I absolutely loved Vreeland's *Luncheon of the Boating Party*, so when I found this by chance in the library, I

scooped it up. And I did read it cover to cover, and I did love learning about painting in the first half of the twentieth century through the lens of small-town Provence daily life, and what WW II was like in Vichy France. That said, this book had a Serious Mansplaining Problem. If Donald Trump looked into a magic mirror and asked, "Who is the mansplainiest one of all?"--an honest magic mirror would have to say, "every single man in Lisette's List." Oh, Lisette--I know you are young and naive and want to learn everything about art, but maybe read a book instead of talking to all these men! There are things in the book--like terminal illness and world war--that give a reader hope that the mansplaininess might end, but every time a Key Mansplainer leaves the stage, a fresh one comes to take his place, and tell Lisette all about art, life, and herself. And she is okay with that, which may be very historically accurate, but it's also super irritating. Also, my favorite character was the goat.

Donna says

This is Historical Fiction set during WWII. I liked this one. The author has a passion for art and she writes beautifully about it and the effects it can have on lives, especially when times were dark.

I liked the characters in this book. The first half was my favorite. The second half wasn't as character driven as the first, but it had a creative flair I could appreciate. It was about a hunt for hidden art in the MC's French village. Some of the events were a little too convenient (and highly improbable) but the story was still worth the read. So 3 stars.

?Karen says

Lisette and her husband Andr  move to Provence when summoned by his grandfather, who is in poor health. Only he seems fine, and is intent on teaching them some appreciation of the paintings he had long ago acquired from some up-and-coming French artists -- maybe these sound familiar -- C zanne and Picasso. Lisette is unhappy with the deception that forced her to leave her beloved Paris but soon learns to love Provence as well and makes some good friends. She also learns much about art, as do we readers. Color, light, shading, and geometry in a painting. Ochre! Construction of frames. Proper storage of canvases. And how the Nazis would do anything to get to those paintings.

This takes place over several years, beginning in 1937, through WWII, and continuing Lisette's story well after the war and some unfortunate losses. She and Andr  lived an inspiring love story, and Lisette was just simply a good soul (she was raised by a nun after all).

One thing I believe is that this author knows art, in all its forms. I had a bit of an art education here, and it reinforced for me how there is much beauty and art all around us just in our everyday lives.. When you plant flowers or arrange a bouquet, when you pick out your dish patterns and your room colors, when you display knick knacks on a shelf, style your hair, take a photograph, enjoy an amazing sunset with your sweetie--you are experiencing forms of art. This author reminds me of that with her beautiful descriptions of nature and her interesting characters, although the characters and the story are likely secondary; a means to an end. Her artistry fills my heart, stimulates my brain, and wakes up all my senses. A rich, lovely book.

Deborah Ideiosepius says

In this story we follow the life of Lisette, a young Parisian woman who is forced to relocate to a small Provence village when her husband's only living relative, an old grandfather who reared him, writes to tell them he is failing and needs Andre to care for him. This is a blow to Lisette who had been about to follow her passion for art by getting a job in a gallery. She consoles herself with the knowledge that Pascal owns seven paintings by famous artists since he used to work in the ochre mines of his town, latter selling the pigments produced by the ochres, which put him in touch with artists. This initial part of the book, concentrating on painting was enjoyable as it was the painting that I was interested in reading about.

Then world war two comes along Andre goes off to fight, hiding the painting before he goes and PLEASE NOTE, not trusting his wife to know where they are hidden. After the war Lisette goes looking for the paintings.

There, that is the essence of the plot. The things that make this novel vibrant and readable however are the clear delight and passion the author most clearly feels for painting and for France. I especially recognise the Francophile in the writing as both my mother and uncle are inveterate Francophiles. The descriptions of Paris, Provance, the countryside and its beauties is detailed and glows, anyone who loves France should enjoy this element of it considerably. On the negative side, this passion leads the author to write a fair bit in French. Long gone are the days where an educated person was expected to be able to read English, French and German with equal fluency and while I will put up with it from old authors, in a modern book it can (and did) become a little aggravating at times. I could understand a lot of the french, but other times you either Google for the meaning or just don't bother. On pages 169-170 where we are presented with a whimsical naming of vegetables and a play on their FRENCH words into peoples names.... You lost me there Susan.

The high point for me was really the art, I now know more about ochres, the impressionists and the impact of WWII on French art, thoroughly enjoyed most of it. Look forward to my next visit to France more eagerly by a bit. The author acknowledges that she is a "passionate lover of art" rather than an artist or a historian, this passion I think, is what makes many aspects of the art descriptions, paintings and trends very, very vivid and enjoyable reading for someone interested in art like myself. Be warned if you do not though; there is quite a of it of it, also, at times the 'voice' in which art matters are described can become very stilted, as though the author/character speaking is reading off notes.

There were a few things about the book that I did not enjoy as much as the art and France though: The characters showed very little development. At the end we are told that eleven years have passed! Lisette was in her early twenties when it started, presumable. Twenties to thirties is an amazing character development for most people, never mind the extreme life events she had been through, yet she appeared practically identical at page 407 to page 5. Incidentally, that is a high page count in which to not bother developing or changing characters at all. Eleven years are just not believable really. The other criticisms are mostly (view spoiler)

So, despite my picking on small details, which is a habit of mine I enjoyed this novel and would recommend it to anyone fond of reading about France and/or art, especially the impressionists. It is a fairly long novel, so be prepared to make it an ongoing project.

Connie says

Art lovers and Francophiles will enjoy "Lisette's List". Fictional characters Lisette and Andre Roux left Paris to live in Roussillon de Provence to care for Andre's ailing grandfather, Pascal. Cosmopolitan Lisette misses Paris, but becomes very fond of Pascal who tells her stories about Pissarro and Cezanne. Pascal had worked in the ochre mines and later sold paints made from the ochre pigments. He made frames for the artists who paid him with their paintings.

When World War II breaks out Andre joins the military, hiding the valuable paintings before he leaves Roussillon because the Nazis were stealing artworks. Lisette befriends the villagers and learns the skills of a country woman. She also spends time with the Jewish couple, artist Marc Chagall and his wife Bella, who are in hiding. After the Nazis surrender Lisette looks for the paintings which have disappeared from their original hiding place, and tries to build a new life for herself.

I especially enjoyed the descriptions of the artworks and of Roussillon. The author has an informative website with photographs of Roussillon and the paintings mentioned in the book. It must be a fabulous sight to see the sun shining through the ochre canyons of Roussillon, carved away by both the mistral winds and quarrymen, with colors ranging from the lightest yellow to orange to rose to purple. This would probably be a good book club read for a group of art lovers since themes of friendship, love, war, and the meaning of home are also present.

Susan Vreeland's website with photographs:

<http://www.svreeland.com/ll-intro.html>

Jane says

I love Provence, Impressionist art, and historical fiction, and thought I would really enjoy this book. However, while the general thread of the heroine learning about artists from a man who used to sell paints and who received a few precious paintings from Cezanne and others was intriguing, the plot grew less believable and more contrived as the book went on. Further, the characters did not draw me in--i felt almost no emotion through their triumphs and tragedies. Thanks, Netgalley, for an advance galley in exchange for an honest review.
