

The History of Love by Nicole Krauss

I hope that this book redeemed me from the January book and I hope that it met the criteria for a love themed month.

This book was so magical with its twists in the story and its weaves through time. The beginning proved a little difficult to understand the back and forth through time and the plethora of new characters being introduced but once I was able to sit in quiet to process the characters, I really enjoyed the plot and it was easier to understand everyone's role in the story. Plus, the theme of unrequited love is always beautiful and suspenseful in a heartbreaking way.

We see the idea of unrequited love between Leo and Alma, Bruno and Alma, Alma and Misha, Bird and God, and Alma's mother and Jacob Marcus. There are a lot of misunderstandings and things left unsaid by the characters. There are many moments where just one small change would have changed the story for the characters. I think that the unrequited love theme also leads to a sub-theme of jealousy. Jealousy, not in its mean spirited variety, but a more envious feeling and from the idea of being helpless in its manifestation of despair. It's the ever present idea of wanting someone to like you as much as you like them, but learning that they don't or that they stopped.

I was most enthralled with the main story of Leo and Alma. It was such a sweet story of young love hindered by war and distance. This book really highlights a story of "what could have been" in a very poetic and solemn way. Leo never gets his chance to live a life with Alma and his son like he envisioned. But his heartache turned into a story that inspired other people to fall in love (present-day Alma's parents). Leo's story is his tribute to his beloved and then becomes an account of his son's true history. Leo is the catalyst for the novel. It's his actions and inactions that keep the plot moving to its sad end. His love never comes to fruition.

This was truly a love story that spans time and language. It was a non-saccharine sweet love story that had historic relevance and was a plausible story for many immigrants back before texting and email. When distance and time separate us, it is easy to see the disintegration of relationships. Luckily, this book brought it all back full circle to remind us that love, grief, and compassion continue no matter how much time lapses.

What did you think of Alma's decision to stay in her marriage and not go with Leo?

Was Leo right in letting his son live his entire life never knowing his biological father?

What is the significance of Leo making a point of being "seen" everyday by someone?

What did you think the purpose of present-day Alma was to the story? Why couldn't we have seen this perspective through her mother who was actually translating the story?

Why did Jacob Marcus seek an alias when getting The History of Love translated? Did he really run a risk by being himself?

What was the most significant relationship besides Leo and Alma?

Is the novel within *The History of Love* Leo's tribute to Alma or a more generalized tribute to an ideal love?

Is the meaning of Alma's name? Is there any significance to why the name was never changed in its many translations?