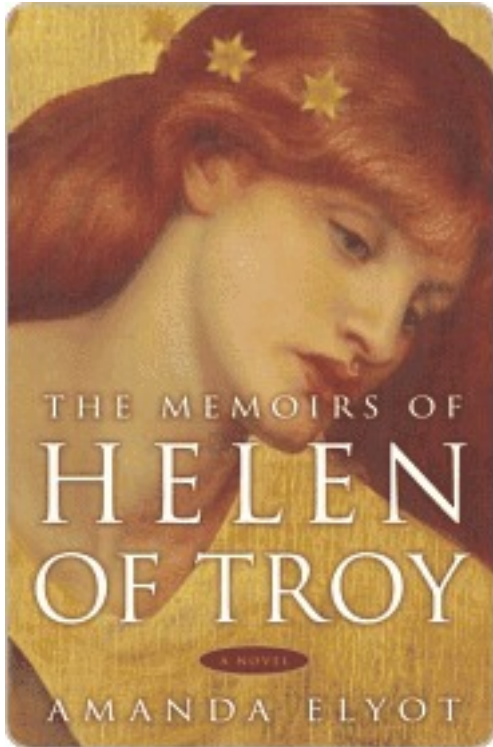

Amanda Elyot

The Memoirs of Helen of Troy



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Description

In this lush, compelling novel of passion and loss, Helen of Troy, a true survivor, tells the truth about her life, her lovers, and the Trojan War. This is the memoir that she has written—her legendary beauty still undimmed by age.

Gossips began whispering about Princess Helen from the moment of her birth. A daughter of the royal house of Sparta, she was not truly the progeny of King Tyndareus, they murmured, but of Zeus, king of the gods. Her mother, Queen Leda, a powerful priestess, was branded an adulteress, with tragic consequences. To complicate matters, as Helen grew to adulthood her beauty was so breathtaking that it overshadowed even that of her jealous sister, Clytemnestra, making her even more of an outcast within her own family. So it came as something of a relief to her when she was kidnapped by Theseus, king of Athens, in a gambit to replenish his kingdom's coffers.

But Helen fell in love with the much older Theseus, and to his surprise, he found himself enamored of her as well. On her forced return to Sparta, Helen was hastily married off to the tepid Menelaus for the sake of an advantageous political alliance. Yet even after years of marriage, the spirited, passionate Helen never became the docile wife King Menelaus desired, and when she fell in love with another man—Paris Alexandros, the prodigal son of King Priam of Troy—Helen unwittingly set the stage for the ultimate conflict: a war that would destroy nearly all she held dear.

I learned that I was different when I was a very small girl: when the golden curls, which barely reached my shoulders at the time, began to turn the color of burnished vermeil. Your grandmother Leda, whom you never knew, told me that I was a child of Zeus. Since I thought my father's name was Tyndareus, her words upset me. Seeing my pink cheeks marred by tears of confusion, my mother handed me a mirror of polished bronze and asked me to study my reflection.

"Do you look like me?" she asked.

I nodded, noting in my own skin the exquisite fairness of her complexion, and her hair the same shade as mine that tumbled like flowing honey past the hollow of her back.

"And do you resemble my husband Tyndareus?" she said to me.

I looked in the mirror and then looked again. For several minutes I remember expecting the mirror to show me my father's face, but Tyndareus was olive complected where I was not, his nose like the beak of a falcon where my own was straight and fine-boned, and his cheekbones were hollow and slack where, even then, beneath a child's rosy plumpness, mine were high and prominent.

"It's time for me to tell you everything," my mother said . . .

—From *The Memoirs of Helen of Troy*

From the Hardcover edition.

Insightful reviews

Sarah: While I was pleased that Elyot chose to take a different aspect with her novel (choosing to include Hermoine's existence and several other aspects of the myth that are often left out of pop culture) I was disappointed in the overall arc of the story. Helen was a less than sympathetic character. I feel as though this book, which spanned forty years, did not flesh out the character as well as could have been in a large piece of work and/or series/trilogy.

julie: i loved greek mythology but ehh this book wasn't doing the justice for me.

Cyp: As Linda Lael Miller said, this book is "luminously intelligent, beautifully written, a delightful blend of magic and mythos".

This book has ensnared me the moment i began with the prologue. Seriously this book is good. Cool classic english:D It can capture the attention of teenager like me and adults with a love for myths and legends, a little action and a mighty lot of love for romance; This book encompasses all my favourite features a book can have. For me, i like books that are set in fictitious worlds(tho this one's not fake...just..well..not here in the present world) with a little romance sprinkled in. If you're like me, you'll love this phenomenon of a book.

To me, Helen's beauty has sort of been the cause of her miseries in her gloriously eventful life. Her beauty and her regal lineage was the reason why her sister, Clytemnestra, and her friends ostracized and excluded her; Her beauty was the cause of her being kidnapped by Theseus when she was only thirteen(i think..or 14?), which had led to her first heartbreak, and things like that. I can't really remember now that i've finished the book(cause this book is like cramped with so much info, i'm suffering from info-overload:/), but i distinctly had the impression that it caused her a lot of pain.

Anyway, Helen's life hadn't been a breeze at all even in childhood. Her father, King Tyndareus of Sparta, shunned her away because he felt betrayed by Queen Leda for having made love with Zeus when she didn't really have a choice. After which Leda hanged herself when Helen was only eight, and Leda was the only one that cared for her in earnest all her life, and now she was gone. She only had a friend because the rest of the girls thought her a bastard child, and as i've said, she was kidnapped when she was 13/14, forced to leave Theseus when she was starting to fall in love with him, then forced into an arranged marriage to Menelaus of Mycenae.

I feel so wronged for Helen after reading this book. It gave me this whole new perspective of

how the Trojan war had started, something like an alternative history. Many people believe and have thus despised Helen for causing the Trojan War to have ignited, but i don't agree. Helen was a victim of the Fates and the goddess Aphrodite, as much as her lover Paris Alexandros was, and as much as you and i. Helen's whole life was filled with so much sufferings and hate, yet all she ever wanted was to marry a man she loved and a happy marriage. Well, after meeting Paris, she finally experienced what true love was, but she couldn't marry him since she was already wife to Menelaus. But after much deliberations, she eloped with Paris. They were really and truly in love. However, stupid and barbaric people like King Agamemnon of Mycenae couldn't be satisfied with what wealth and power he already possessed and had set his eyes on Troy's Hellespont for years, so with the excuse(and i stress the word "EXCUSE") of the pride and honor of his brother, Menelaus, being sullied by Helen's infidelity, he launched an attack on Troy with the entire Aegean archipelago(i have no idea what you call it actually) backing him up. So you see, it wasn't really Helen's fault. And anyway, way before Helen and Paris' meeting, the latter had this prophetic dream of Aphrodite saying that the most beautiful woman to have walked the earth would one day be his. Yes so i really advocate people to stop blaming Helen for what was not a deed done by her and was probably inevitable with or without her being the catalyst.

Anyhow, aside from all this depressing stuff, Amanda Elyot has just introduced to me a man that will forever be my ideal one- Prince Hector of Troy, beloved first son of King Priam and Queen Hecuba and heir to the Trojan throne. He is really one of the perfect-est man ever. Seriously, he's like the man for every woman. He is the Trojan's greatest and noblest warrior, he is the most devoted and loyal husband of Princess Andromache of Thebes(which is really, really rare as it is a customary practice for men then to have bedded many women), the best, most loving father i have ever heard and seen, the kindest friend and most caring and loving brother. He is perfect. Haha, for me anyway. Though my friends say it isn't right to fall in love with someone who is more than a hundred times older than me and dead, but i know he is very much alive(oh man this is cliché, but i'm gonna say it anyway) in my heart, and he has forever left his legacy in the Trojan War(being the bravest and kindest commander) and in the songs and poems of the bards:) And doesn't the saying goes, love transcends time or sth?haha. Usually in books, girls will like those male characters who are deep, quiet, brooding, reclusive, nice only to the girl he likes, those kind of stuff, well Hector is those fictitious characters come alive:)

Oh i am sort of amazed by how many ways Elyot can put across the word "sex". I can only remember 2 epic ones, one of them only vaguely because there were too many to track of. My favourite one was when Helen and Paris were in the bath right after Paris' and Menelaus' one-on-one combat nine years into the war:"...when i felt the greatest manifestation of his mortality pierce the soft flesh between my thighs...", and once:"...he worshipped my sex...". Cool, right(tho kinda disturbing)?

I was kinda shocked and really sad when Paris died(Big spoiler), especially the part where he was moaning for Oenone, who was his childhood lover, instead of Helen with his last gasps of life. Well, that was just plain tragic for Helen who was there.

Even tho Elyot said in her note that this story isn't real, i do believe that it really did happen. Well, there's the Trojan Horse if you want evidence, the prototype's in Troy now(i have no idea

where's the real one). Like the Sky gods of Olympus, they will only exist if people believe in them. I do believe in that Hector, Helen, Paris, etc did roam this earth once and i do also believe that the Trojan War did happen, just like the Oddysey of Odysseus:)

Tawny : i admire studying ancient fiction yet locate its usually difficult to discover attention-grabbing well-written books. i actually loved the 1st half this novel. the writer evidently did her learn simply because a number of the info concerning Mycenaean Greece are fairly accurate. I cherished that she integrated the kidnapping by means of Theseus and the start of Iphigenia yet i locate it rather unbelievable that she will be capable of maintain a being pregnant hidden from such a lot of her family. I additionally didn't comprehend why she by no means observed her daughter again- Mycenae and Sparta weren't seperated through an ocean! yet then i discovered none of her kids particularly performed a big half within the novel, that is really ironic as the narrative is supposedly written to Hermione. the radical quite misplaced me whilst Paris got here into the picture. I simply couldn't get into their love tale which relatively must have been the point of interest of the full book. The time in Troy appeared rushed and Paris's relations certainly was once no longer as flushed out as Helen's was once within the beginning. I additionally might have beloved to listen to extra descriptions concerning the war. i assume i used to be spoiled by means of Homer in that regard. the tale fairly had to be seperate books to slot every thing in. ultimately I hated that the writer went with the the parable of Helen and Menelaus in Egypt. I slogged via that half yet barely. total i'd suggest it yet was once disenchanted because it began so good yet then obtained poorer because it progressed. I did take pleasure in it greater than another Trojan novels i've got read.

Joan: I hated this book. It price me greater than a month of studying time!

Madonna Analla: This was once a very sturdy book! I loved it quite a bit simply because the entire tales i have examine the Trojan struggle have been from the point of view of the lads who have been combating it and that i by no means heard a lot approximately Helen and the way she felt concerning the conflict or what occurred from her view. This was once that lacking piece. It gave an exceptional standpoint on what occurred best as much as that well-known war. It advised the very human tales of affection and loss and occasions that folks get themselves into even this present day and the way these events have been utilized by conflict hungry kings as an excuse to invade a land they desired to assault for years.

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