



Whistle Stop: A Novel

Maritta Wolff

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Now back in print -- Maritta Wolff's 1941 masterpiece about small-town Midwestern life in post-Depression America

Whistle Stop, published to rave reviews and astonishing commercial success, is the story of the Veech family, an oversize, poverty-stricken tribe trying to make good in a cruel world. Through the course of a punishingly hot summer, we experience life with the six children and three adult Veeches as they bicker, brawl, make up, and provide titillating morsels of scandal for the neighborhood. A work of darkly comic grotesque, replete with shades of Flannery O'Connor, *Whistle Stop* is also a wrenching and earnest rumination on the tragedy of thwarted love.

Whistle Stop: A Novel Details

Date : Published April 5th 2005 by Scribner (first published 1941)

ISBN : 9780743254861

Author : Maritta Wolff

Format : Paperback 371 pages

Genre : Fiction, Classics, Literary Fiction, Womens, Literature, American

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From Reader Review Whistle Stop: A Novel for online ebook

Mary says

Gritty realism- the Veech family is bawdy, brawling and a group of characters to never quite forget. A great piece of writing from an author that needs to be read more.

Rose Zivkovich says

I admired her way of weaving the storyline through a variety of unique characters and just the raw feeling of life in post-Depression America.

Nick Duretta says

This novel of a small-town Michigan family dealing with a raft of challenges during one blistering summer in the early 1940s is remarkable on several levels. The dialogue and social mores are unsurprisingly dated, yet the writing is still fresh and vibrant, all the more astounding for being the writer's first book. Wolff creates each member of the large, beleaguered Veech family so distinctly that each comes alive as a fully formed individual, all flawed in some way, but all heartbreakingly human. With very few differences you could envision such a family living out pretty much the same scenario today. This is a novel that will stay with you; I'm pleased someone rediscovered it and put it into print again.

Bebenola says

Our last book before Hurricane Katrina hit. 4 month hiatus

jimtown says

Strangely never answered the questions in my mind but well illustrates the inner-workings of a large family. Mother Molly, the head of the household who dishes out compliments and criticism as easily as the food she feeds her dependent grown family. Sam, the father sees their children more clearly but is never able to offer any input with Molly around, so he drowns himself in his reading. Ernie, the eldest son, often called upon for paying bills and little else is slightly peeved because he is not the golden son, it is the lazy, shiftless Kenny who was favored by all. His killer charm allows him to never need to buy his own drink or cigarette, can also turn deadly at times. The beautiful and shadowy Mary, always there when financial help or advice is needed but otherwise mysteriously absent. Twins Jen and Josie couldn't be much more different as they strike out in search of independence and identity. Quiet and lonely Carl is jumpier than a long tailed cat in a room full of rocking chairs. Mary's spooky daughter Dorothy always lurking about, listening to gossip and telling lies. No relationship is more puzzling than the unexplained sweetness between Mary and Kenny. No answers in this book.

Terence Oneal says

A John Steinbeck wannabe.

Katherine Wallace says

Such a great set up of story and characters. What a family or "fambly" as Molly Veech says. Molly and Sam Veech and their six children are fascinating and each one of them distinct. We spend a great deal of time getting to know them before anything really happens, then when it does, it's all over. That's why I didn't rate the book higher because I felt unsatisfied by the ending.

Megin V says

I think this book is weird. While it is an enjoyable read (especially for a lazy summer day) I still have no clue what happened at the end, even though I read and re-read the ending about three times. Three stars because its an average book.

Sorcia Macnasty says

Maritta Wolff is so under-rated, but this book really makes you question WHY. Her characters are riveting and her dialogue is simply fantastic. She twines the hyper-realistic with unbelievable stories and events.

Oh, one warning -- this book will make you crave a cigarette, if you've ever been a smoker. All the characters routinely light up and her prose makes each cigarette seem delicious! :)

karen says

okay, it's time to champion another forgotten author.

it is appalling that i have never written a review for a maritta wolff book before now. thank goodness for paper-writing procrastination, or i wouldn't even be writing it now!

maritta wolff was the ballsiest writer of her time. and so forgotten that some of her books aren't even listed here on goodreads.

it is a massive oversight.

this book is one of three re-issued by scribner's in the early 2000's, and that is the only way i ever would have heard of her. after i burned through those three, i managed to track down all but one of her other books that

had not been reissued. but i am almost afraid to read them because of that thing i have where i will feel cast adrift once i run out of them. (fortunately, the one i don't have, i have only ever seen for like 300 bux, so until i feel comfortable spending 300 bux on a single book, it will remain my *tamerlane*)

this one is just perfect, for me and my particular literary themes and needs. it focuses on a poor family in small town michigan with their long-nursed familial resentments, possibly incestuous relationships, their desires too big for their circumstances, and the force of their personalities. it is at once vast and claustrophobic.

her descriptions are amazing. amazing. i have never read anyone who made me feel so woeful and downtrodden since steinbeck. but she is this 22-year-old kid writing this in the early 40's - a woman - writing with such furious envelope-pushing strength about things that most women of her time wouldn't have ever touched. it's as though she wasn't even aware that there *was* an envelope. like angel clare. (wow. what a bookdorky joke i just made. i don't know if i am proud or ashamed)

i often compare her to dawn powell, but it is strictly an affective comparison. powell writes about artists struggling in the greatest city in the world, tough-talking and back-stabbing to get ahead. wolff's characters would be those characters, too, if they could just get to that city. instead, they are trapped in their anonymous towns, infighting and struggling and occasionally gaining ground.

but both she and powell are the most under-read american women of the early twentieth century.

now go and change that. this one and *night shift* are both readily available and excellent. *sudden rain* is less good, but anything that sits in a fridge for thirty years is bound to be a little off. yup. that's where they found it. possibly because her first husband died in a fire, and it was her way of protecting it, but she sat on it for THIRTY YEARS!!! and it's okay. not great. a little more soap-opera-y than i like. go with the other two. i will let you know when i read my old fragile editions of her earlier stuff that is so old they don't even have isbn's!

and if anyone wants to buy me a copy of *the sighing of the heart*, i will accept it. i promise.

Coyle says

The author is a good enough writer that I kept reading... mostly in the hopes that the train would jump the tracks and tear through the Veech house, ending the whole lot of them. The story could then pick up with a different, and by definition better, family.

Shirley Lawton says

The story of a family in days gone by. I liked it, particularly the earlier part of the book, especially how the characters' narratives were written. Toward the end, I thought the writing wasn't quite as good, possibly, and not much of an ending.

I recently transcribed my father's diaries. He kept them from 1935 when he was 16 years old living on a farm and going to high school all the way through his days in the US Navy during WW II. He was stationed on an oil tanker ship for most of the war and had time to do a lot of reading while they were at sea. I kept a record of the books he read and their authors. Whistle Stop was one of those books. I enjoyed reading the book and

thinking of my father reading it in his hammock on the ship.

Rebecca Saxon says

I read this book, written in 1943, as a result of a cool school assignment (for my Reader's Advisory course). We had to find a truly forgotten author, read one of their books and write a paper convincing readers why they should check out this author. I found this book in the collection of books I inherited from my grandma. I was surprised by the grittiness, and honest depictions of the realities of life in this novel. It touched on subject matter like adultery, children born out of marriage, crime, depression and even incest! Although a long book, I really enjoyed this and would recommend checking out any of these author's books you can get your hands on.

Les Wolf says

A lot of fun to read. Molly and Sam and their children Mary, Kenny, Ernie, Carl, Josette, Jennifer and granddaughter Dorothy all live together in one house along with a boarder old Jud Higgins. You soon feel like you know every one of them and it's "game on"...

Maureen says

i can't talk about whistle stop without thanking karen for turning me onto maritta wolff, a writer who really should be more well known. check out karen's evangelizing review here. join us, and testify!

here's my hallelujah:

when you read a maritta wolff novel, it feels like she is gently holding your ear against a thin tenement wall of permeable words, pushing you into her world, overhearing her characters, knowing more than what they'd want you to know. she also transmits to you her deep understanding of human character, and ability she has to imbue it in the people she helps you to subsume. the fact that she was 22(!) when she wrote this novel, only makes me beam at the seduction of her prose, and the gravity of her spirit, seemingly wise beyond her years. but there is no other explanation for it.

she conjures with clarity the veech family in all its boisterous devotion, devotion that pushes beyond comfort to disturbingly intimate. i've come to think of them as lolita family robinson although it's imprecise: the little girl in the book is certainly no nymphet, the creepiness of her character and the mysteries around her parentage, and the parentage of those around her spin, the keys that i aim to keep spoiler-free, in this review. i feel pretty sure that what i think is true, is true and if so, yeesh. (non sequitur: and what about the boarder?!? i didn't know what to think!) so there's for why the book reminds me lolita. as for the family robinson: the veeches struggling through life in socioeconomic wreck but with that loving family spirit i connect with the film i saw on wide world of disney. the family really love each other, and they're messed up, sure. but they've been through a lot, and sometimes it's hard to keep still when you can't settle down.

maritta wolff writes with a vivid stroke. i want to read more. i notice little obsessions: trains figure almost as dei ex machina in her books, ready to pitch in to further along her story. did she always do that? i guess i'll see. :)

