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ZOE HELLER

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ZOE HELLER : NOTES ON A SCANDAL before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised NOTES ON A SCANDAL:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. It Is All About BarbaraBy Ron KA middle-age female high school teacher has an affair with a student that began when the student was fifteen. The narrator will mention more than once that the uproar among the public, friends of the teacher, friends of the student, and the school staff is different than what it would be if the situation were a male teacher with a female student. The could not be a book like this without making that observation; by doing so we have gotten social politics out of the way.For those looking for salacious sexual content; this is NOT the book for you. In the first few pages the reader is almost promised all the lurid details of an eight-month affair, but you will have to look very hard to find any good stuff.What the reader will find is some excellent writing in the way of character development. Barbara, the narrator, is a fascinating character. More and more of her character is revealed as the book moves on. The novel is in the form of Barbaras notes on the scandal once Sheba has been caught. Barbara wants to make notes on her relationship with Sheba from the time she first met the new teacher until the present time, when she is still taking care of Sheba in the house of Shebas mom. While Barbaras focus is on Sheba and student lover Connolly; Barbara also writes of her own relationship with headmaster Pabbem, former best friend Jennifer, and Sue Hodge. It seems Barbara is quite jealous of Sue because Shebas first close friend was Sue, not Barbara.Barbara also is involved with Shebas family, husband Richard, daughter Polly, and son Ben. Barbara does not have a high opinion of many. She thinks Richard is pretentious and does not deserve Sheba. She thinks Polly is disrespectful and disdainful of Sheba (a correct viewpoint). She does not have bad things to say about Ben, but Ben has Downs syndrome.Sheba is an upper class lady trying to make a difference in sharing enlightenment

with the lower class rough crowd of students at her school. Connolly is a student who sees an opportunity for sex. Sheba does not start out with the idea of sex with a student. She looks at Connolly's early attempts at starting a relationship as cute. She rationalizes her responses as polite; she does not want to stunt his social growth by an outright rebuff. Then she becomes intrigued. Then she responds with more enthusiasm, then she gets caught. After she gets caught, daughter Polly will not talk to her, husband Richard throws her out of the house and allows only limited visitation with Ben. Sheba loses her job. Barbara loses her job, ousted by the headmaster she never liked, but she was ready to retire anyway. Sheba moves into a house owned by her brother Eddie, who is away in another country for an extended period of time. Barbara moves in with her for emotional support; she also begins making notes (this novel). There is a surprise, not to be revealed here. How did she get caught? Did someone see Sheba and Connolly together? Who informed? But the surprise takes backstage to the examination of Barbara's life (as explained by Barbara). And the answer to the unasked question of why Barbara, really quite a snob, is taking care of Sheba, remains unanswered.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Read the book....then see the movie

By Rhonda Filipan
I saw the movie (twice) before buying the book but wish I had done it the other way around. The story is narrated by Barbara Covett, a cynical, 60-something teacher who is very lonely---and very obsessed with Sheba, the pretty, 40-something art teacher at her school who had an affair with a high school student. Although the book (and the wonderfully-adapted movie) seek to question Sheba's actions, it's actually Barbara who is the real villain. The book is so well written that readers actually believe Barbara early on. She is simply writing "notes" on "a scandal" that occurred at her school, right? And she wants to protect her best friend and fellow teacher, Sheba, by documenting how Sheba got involved with a teenage student, right? False and more false! It's not until later in the book, though, that we realize that Barbara is an unreliable narrator---that's why I wish I had read the book before I had watched the movie. All these "notes" are actually Barbara's way of documenting her so-called relationship / obsession with Sheba. I think Barbara actually feels betrayed that Sheba chose a young man over her. Barbara's fixation on Sheba is so over the top, but she justifies it in the book and in the movie because she's "lonely." Please. Get another cat, crazy lady! Volunteer somewhere! Just. Get. Away. If you've ever known someone with an unhealthy fixation on YOU, you will find Barbara Covett as creepy as I did. That being said, the novel (and in turn my review) do nothing at all to refute the unflattering societal stereotype of the old / educated / lonely / spinster-teacher with cats. Other reviewers sympathize with Barbara and found passages about her solitary life touching. Not me. Her desire to attach herself to Sheba seems so obsessive that I think it makes Sheba's equally obsessive affair with the underage Steven who-smells-like-fresh-laundry Connolly seem almost acceptable. Both are May-December romances. And both relationships would be great to discuss in a readers' group, I think. Judi Dench plays Barbara Covett (to the hilt) in the film; Kate Blanchett plays the posh pottery teacher, Sheba. And now I want to read MORE books by Zoe Heller. --Rhonda Filipan

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Thought-provoking disclosure of all parties involved in elicit acts

By Carolyn Dargevics
I don't usually buy British novels because I simply can't get past the differences in our languages. However, due to a trusted review, I thought I'd give it a try. In general, this was an OK novel but I enjoyed more how it was written, as the first-person's memoir or journal. The author was very perceptive on many issues and brought to light many concepts that run through my mind: the media's pouncing on a story -- any story, an exaggeration in so many ignorant minds, lack of empathy and/or sympathy within us all, egocentrism of all, the hormonal stupidity of both genders of all ages and stages. The story kept moving; in other words, I didn't have to scan anything to get at the meat. The characters were well defined; I could envision all of them. This was a different take on what some people would have expected and I like that. For me, it defined that sex between an adult male teacher and a teenage girl is very different from sex between an adult female teacher and a teenage boy. Very different! I won't go into the details, but those differences -- intentions of all parties -- should definitely be considered in any court of law.