

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



Marie Benedict is a lawyer with more than ten years' experience as a litigator at two of the country's premier law firms, who found her calling unearthing the hidden historical stories of women. Her mission is to excavate from the past the most important, complex and fascinating women of history and bring them into the light of present-day where we can finally perceive the breadth of their contributions as well as the insights they bring to modern day issues. She embarked on a new, thematically connected series of historical novels with *The Other Einstein*, which tells the tale of Albert Einstein's first wife, a physicist herself, and the role she might have played in his theories. The next novel in this series is the *USA Today* bestselling *Carnegie's Maid* -- which released in January of 2018 -- and the book that followed is the *New York Times* bestseller and Barnes & Noble Book Club Pick *The Only Woman in the Room*, the story of the brilliant inventor Hedy Lamarr, which published in January of 2019. In January of 2020, *Lady Clementine*, the story of the incredible Clementine

Churchill, was released, and became an international bestseller. Her next novel, the Instant *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestselling *The Mystery of Mrs. Christie*, was published on December 29, 2020, and her first co-written book, *The Personal Librarian*, with the talented Victoria Christopher Murray, will be released on June 29, 2021. Writing as Heather Terrell, Marie also published the historical novels *The Chrysalis*, *The Map Thief*, and *Brigid of Kildare*.

- Author's website

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the various ways that gender affects the characters in this novel. Do you think gender would influence Mileva's life in the same way if she lived today?
2. How do the characters in the book—Mileva, Albert, their friends, their parents—experience religion, and does that change over the course of the story? How do Mileva's and Albert's different understandings of religiosity impact their relationship to each other?

3. This novel can be seen as a quest for understanding, a search for the divine in the natural order of the world. How does the study of math and physics become this quest for Albert and Mileva? Are they, either separately or together, successful in their crusade? Does unpuzzling life's mysteries have disparate meanings for them?
4. Betrayal is a recurrent motif in the book and an unfortunate reality in Mileva's life. What forms of betrayal does she experience? How does her reaction to those betrayals propel the story forward, for better or worse? Has Mileva engaged in betrayal herself?
5. Discuss the setting of the book, a world on the brink of astounding scientific discoveries, political upheaval, and ultimately horrible World War I atrocities. Does this historical setting affect the characters? What role, if any, does it play in shaping their lives?
6. Over the course of the novel, we learn a great deal about Mileva's childhood and early adult years. What life events led her to math and science? What hurdles did she have to surmount to even get her footing on that path?
7. From a very young age, Mileva assumes that she will never marry due to her physical disability. How is this disability both a blessing and a curse? How does her limp impact her differently at different life stages?
8. Mileva and Albert are drawn to each other from the beginning of their years together at the Polytechnic. What qualities compel them toward one another? Is their relationship "inevitable," as Mileva believes?
9. Mileva and Albert share the language of science, and it knits them together. Are they equal scientific partners from the start of their relationship? Do they become the "bohemians" they so frequently discuss?
10. Leaving Lieserl behind with her mother while she awaits Albert in Zürich and Bern is a huge, pivotal moment for Mileva. Do you think she made the right choice? Should she have stayed with Lieserl and disobeyed Albert's request?
11. The loss of Lieserl impacts Mileva tremendously, yet she doesn't fully share her feelings with Albert. Why does she keep her devastation from him? Do you think she should have been more open with him?
12. On several occasions throughout the novel, the characters undergo metamorphoses. What are Mileva's changes, and what instigates them? Do some of them frustrate you or take too long? Does Albert change during the course of the novel? If so, how would you describe his evolution?
13. While Mileva does not form friendships until rather late in her life, the ties she forms are deep. How do her friendships and her acquaintances with other women factor in her ultimate life choices?
14. Albert Einstein is arguably one of the most famous figures of the twentieth century, but *The Other Einstein* shares a story about him that you might not have otherwise heard. Did this novel change your perception of him? About the stories we are told regarding other women in history?

BOOK REVIEWS

Booklist

Benedict's novel, her first, of love, ambition, disappointment, and betrayal begins in 1896 with a young Serbian woman enrolling in the Swiss Federal Polytechnic to study physics. Though possessed of exceptional intellect and talent, Mileva is not easily accepted by her male classmates and professors, except for one outspoken student. Their classroom relationship leads to much more, first sharing music, then mutual scientific theorizing, on to a sexual relationship that yields a child and marriage. The remarkable hook here is that Mileva's love interest is Albert Einstein. The sweetness of the courtship and the bitterness of his betrayal, both scientific—the source of the theory of relativity might have been her rather than him—and personal, with his unfaithfulness leading to divorce, provide the tension. Benedict insightfully portrays Mileva, Albert, and other European intellectuals of the time and dramatizes the difficulties a woman faced when attempting to enter that world. She also vividly captures the atmosphere, the cafes, the boardinghouse, and the customs of Mileva's world, making for an engaging and thought-provoking fictional telling of the poignant story of an overshadowed woman scientist. Copyright 2014 Booklist Reviews.

Library Journal

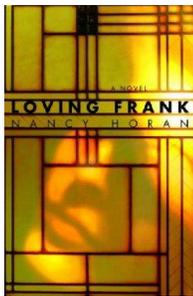
To what extent did Albert Einstein's first wife, Mileva Marić, contribute to his groundbreaking theories? That question lies at the heart of this first novel, narrated by Mileva. When she arrives from Zagreb to study physics in Zurich in 1896, she faces local prejudice against Serbs and pity for her limp resulting from a congenital defect. She also must prove herself academically in a class of five men, including Albert; his interest in her quickly shifts from intellectual to romantic, with promises of marriage he doesn't fulfill until after their daughter, Lieserl, is born. Having lost her academic chances, Mileva hopes to continue collaborating with Albert on his theories, but he never acknowledges Mileva's work and increasingly treats her like a servant. Benedict draws on many sources, especially letters from Albert, Mileva, and her friend Helene Kaufler, but Albert in this portrait emerges as self-centered, unlikable, and ambitious. And as Mileva submits to Albert's repeated bullying, it is hard to imagine her drive and determination in pre-Zurich days. Although both Lieserl's fate (early death or possible adoption) and Mileva's scientific contributions are subjects of debate, they continue to stimulate discussion. VERDICT With a reading group guide included and major publicity campaign planned, expect steady demand in public libraries. [See Prepub Alert, 5/2/16.]—Kathy Piehl, Minnesota State Univ. Lib., Mankato [Page 77]. (c) Copyright 2016 Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

Kirkus Reviews

What if Mileva Marić, Albert Einstein's first wife, contributed more to the theory of relativity than anyone knew? Afflicted with a congenital hip defect, Mileva grows up convinced she will always be disdained and will never marry. Her only hope for happiness lies in physics; indeed, she sees God in the details of the mathematical universe. Fortunately, her father supports her unconventional destiny. Soon after moving to Zurich to study at the Swiss Federal Polytechnic, Mileva has not only gained a circle of like-minded girlfriends, but also attracted the attention of

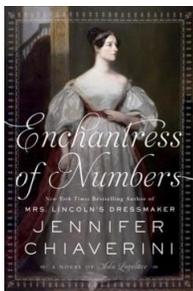
a disheveled classmate: Albert. Despite Mileva's reticence, Albert quickly ensconces himself in her life, joining in spirited musical evenings previously reserved for her girlfriends, pulling her into intellectual debates at cafes, and ultimately seducing her into his bed. Enthralled by her first love, Mileva wonders whether marrying Albert is wise: what will become of her own dreams? Benedict's debut novel carefully traces Mileva's life—from studious schoolgirl to bereaved mother—with attention paid to the conflicts between personal goals and social conventions. Aligning the scientific accomplishments with the domestic tribulations of 19th-century life holds promise. Yet from the moment Mileva falls for Albert, she submits easily to the expectations both society and, surprisingly, Albert hold for women. Narratively, too, Benedict douses the fire and passion expected from such an iconoclast as Mileva Marić. She certainly builds tension each time Mileva bends a rule to advance her relationship with Albert. Yet even these first forays into collaboration reduce Mileva from Albert's intellectual equal, and often superior, to the shadows: Albert easily convinces Mileva to ignore her doubts about his fidelity, establishing the pattern of sacrificing Mileva's astonishing intelligence to social harmony. An intriguing, if thin, reimagining of one of the strongest intellectual partnerships of the 19th century. Copyright Kirkus 2016 Kirkus/BPI Communications. All rights reserved.

READALIKES



***Loving Frank* by Nancy Horan**

Fact and fiction blend in a historical novel that chronicles the relationship between seminal architect Frank Lloyd Wright and Mamah Cheney, from their meeting, when they were each married to another, to the clandestine affair that shocked Chicago society.



***Enchantress of Numbers* by Jennifer Chiaverini**

Rigorously educated in mathematics and science by her mother, an only legitimate child of brilliant Romantic poet Lord Byron is introduced into London society as a highly eligible heiress before forging a deep bond with inventor Charles Babbage and using her unique talents to become the world's first computer programmer.



***The Aviator's Wife* by Melanie Benjamin**

A story inspired by the marriage between Charles and Anne Morrow Lindbergh traces the romance between a handsome young aviator and a shy ambassador's daughter whose relationship is marked by wild international acclaim, history-making flights and the world-shocking abduction of their child.