

THE FOUR NEAPOLITAN NOVELS BY ELENA FERRANTE

Coordinators: Linda Anstendig and Ettie Taichman

Elena Ferrante has taken the book world by storm with her four book series, referred to as the Neapolitan Tetralogy. The novels, set in a poor neighborhood in Naples, trace the intensely complicated friendship of two women from early childhood to old age. Interwoven is the cultural, political and class system of Naples and of Italy during the period between 1950 and 2010. Although Ferrante's identity remains a mystery, her narrative voice is so intimate that readers often feel they have a personal relationship with her. Join us in reading the series and discover why Ferrante has become such a highly acclaimed writer and literary sensation. **Please be aware that a commitment to reading approximately 150 pages/week is required.**

Readings:

My Brilliant Friend: Book One by Elena Ferrante, translated by Ann Goldstein, {Europa Editions, first edition, September 25, 2012 ISBN-10: 1609450787}.

The Story of a New Name, Book Two by Elena Ferrante, translated by Ann Goldstein, {Europa Editions, first edition, September 3, 2013, ISBN-10:1609451341}.

Those Who Leave and Those Who Stay, Book Three by Elena Ferrante, translated by Ann Goldstein, {Europa Editions, first edition, September 2, 2014 ISBN-10: 160945233X}.

The Story of a Lost Child, Book 4 by Elena Ferrante, translated by Ann Goldstein, {Europa Editions, first edition, September 1, 2015, ISBN-10: 1609452860}.

Linda Anstendig joined the IRP in fall 2015, having just retired as an English Professor and Associate Dean at Pace University. She will be coordinating for the first time. **Ettie Taichman** has co-coordinated three study groups on Canadian writers, most recently on Alice

Munro.

***** Syllabus – A Work in Progress *****

Weeks 1, 2, 3: *My Brilliant Friend*

Week 1: **INTRODUCTION:** “I feel no nostalgia for our childhood; it was full of violence”(narrator,p. 37) “We lived in a world in which children and adults were often wounded, blood flowed from the wounds...”(p. 32)

READ: pp. 1-87

Some Questions: How is story framed? Who are the characters? What do we learn about their friendship? What do you notice about their neighborhood? What is significance of scene with dolls?

Week 2: Concept of “dissolving margins.” Video clip.

“An essence not only seductive but dangerous emanated from Lila” (p. 143)

READ: pp. 89-209

Some questions: What changes do you note in neighborhood? characters? Friendship? What is nature of their schooling? Importance of shoes? books?

Week 3: Conclusion—themes, motifs, language

“...what I lacked she had, and vice versa, in a continuous game of exchanges and reversals that, now happily, now painfully, made us indispensable to each other. “(p. 259); “ the alienness... was expanding inside me...I felt completely alone.” (322)

“The plebs were us.”(p. 329)

READ: pp. 209-333

Some questions: The love interests? What changes do you note in characters? Relationships? Friendship? Schooling? Significance of the betrothal and marriage?

Report: The role of the Mafia in Naples of 50's...

Weeks 4 ,5, 6: *The Story of a New Name*

Weeks 7, 8, 9: *Those Who Leave and Those Who stay*

Weeks 10, 11, 12: *The Lost Child*