

THE BODECIA BOOK CLUB REVIEW

December by Elizabeth H Winthrop

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Eleven-year-old Isabelle hasn't spoken in nine months, and as December begins the situation is getting desperate. Her mother has stopped work to devote herself full-time to her daughter's care. Four psychiatrists have already given up on her, and her school, which until now has allowed her to study from home, will not take her back in the New Year. Her parents are frantically trying to understand what has happened to their child so they can help her, but they cannot escape the thought of darker possibilities. What if Isabelle is damaged beyond their reach? Will she never speak again? Is it their fault?

As her parents spiral around Isabelle's impenetrable silence, she herself emerges, in a fascinating portrait of an exceptional child, as a bright young girl in need of help yet too terrified to ask for it.

This is a novel of spellbinding emotional power about a family in crisis, showing the delicate web of threads that connect a husband and wife, parents and children, and how easily it can tear, although the mother did give up her job to care for her there did not seem to put too much of a strain on their relationship, The mother was very patient, which we discussed we would find very hard and frustrating. Both Isabelle's parents work so it may had started out as a way of her getting their attention, for her to stop talking although the longer it went on the harder she found it to start talking again. Elizabeth H Winthrop describes the scene very well and you can picture the story very well, however it was too descriptive in places which led to it being a little depressing. There was many sub plots that did not lead to anything, it seemed to us that the Elizabeth H Winthrop wanted to pack every single story line into one book.

There is a high point in the book which we all related to where the father, Wilson, empties the garage on a thought that he will tidy it up to just put everything back in again. Another part in the book which made us laugh was the ant farm that Isabelle was cultivating ... in the cupboard in the kitchen!

Elizabeth H Winthrop was born and raised in New York City. She graduated from Harvard University in 2001 with a BA in English and American Literature and Language, and in 2004 she received her Master of Fine Arts in fiction from the University of California. She lives in Savannah, Georgia with her husband, who is a painter, and her St Bernard.

We gave *The Family Tree* **4 / 10**, which currently stands as 8th on our books reading list.

The book we are now reading is **Forgive Me by Amanda Eyre Ward**.

Don't forget the first rule of Book Club!