

P O E T I C P E R C E P T I O N – R E V I E W

VOICES

A Novel by Roger Ladd Memmott

Reviewed by Kelly Lamb, Ed.

Poetic Perception

As noted in the publisher's blurb, *Voices* is an utterly stirring, erotically charged, and morally complex tale of uncompromising honesty.

From her earliest memory, nineteen-year-old Kala Westergaard's life seems to be driven by accidents. She, herself, is an "accident" of birth. Both her parents are "accidentally" killed. Her best friend, Sofi, "accidentally" gets pregnant. One night, coming back from a party with her boyfriend, they are "accidentally" run off the road by a deer in the headlights—which, of course, leads to the plot-driving "accidents" of murder and rape!

Kala is a "good" girl who cannot seem to avoid the influence of evil in its most diabolical forms. Although, attractive, personable, and more resilient than we might imagine, she is completely bewildered by her plight. To ameliorate a subtle sense of despair, she fixates on one of the most complex and mysterious figures in history (and literature), Joan of Arc. But unlike the Maid of Orléans, Kala's lot appears to be without a cause.

The reader, however, sees otherwise, quickly coming to understand that this is a book not about the possible and potential horrors of life but about overcoming life's miserable odds. Kala's heart, even in the heat of vengeance, is one of forgiveness. How you come to rid yourself of evil and at the same moment find the courage to forgive is not only a dichotomous but paradoxical way to keep your sanity (and perhaps your soul) intact.

Two of the story's most surprising revelations are when Kala gives her "accidental" baby up to the sister of the man who raped her and later discovers that her father may not be who she thought—accompanied by all of the subtle and ambiguous implications of her previous and unwitting "accidental" relationship with him. When finally she falls in love (with an "accidental" boy), and learns about the axis mundi of life, she comes to find both the center of herself and the central and conflicting machinery of heaven and hell, clinging to the former with a fervor that belies the faith of her beloved Maid, in her final hour, chained to the stake.

Whether or not you agree with the religious theme in the book, Kala is an archetype of yesteryear—ultimately redeemed as a result of her obsession with Joan of Arc and the vicissitudes of her convoluted life that lead to an exemplary faith. She wants to be good in spite of the world, finally recognizing that she, herself, like each of us, accounts for the world at large—that is, the world within as well as the world without. By such notion we find an inner peace, if not the prospect of salvation beyond.

Irrespective of purposeful tense changes, the narrative flows, completely immersing us and carrying us along like the troublesome river that flows through the book. We become a part of the story as the story becomes a part of us. Although the story is completely satisfying on a literal level, the publisher's discussion questions at the end of the book suggest that the story could be read and re-read to better appreciate the many implications and studious themes.

To say the least, the book is ride—stunning! And nothing short of a tour de force!

READERS' FAVORITE - REVIEW

VOICES

A Novel by Roger Ladd Memmott

Rating: 5 Stars

A Readers' Favorite Book

Reviewed by Rita Kaye Vetsch



VOICES, a novel by Roger Ladd Memmott, is intriguing.

Plot: Kala Westergaard, orphaned when she was four years old, was raised by her grandmother and aunt. The story begins with Kala and her boyfriend, Tommy, coming home from a party in the early morning hours. They encounter a deer on the dark road and end up in the ditch. This seemingly simple accident sets up a chain of dark events that will change Kala's life forever.

An old truck arrives on the scene of the accident and two men jump out of the cab. In a terrible twist of fate, these men are wanted for abducting women all over the state. They hurt Tommy, and when Kala runs, they chase her through the woods. Before she can escape into the nearby river, one of the men rapes her. Throughout the novel, Kala compares herself to Joan of Arc, with flames engulfing her from within. She must stay strong, not only to deliver her wrath of revenge on these two men, but to fight for justice and her own inner peace.

During her recuperation, when Kala realizes she is pregnant, she is driven close to insanity—and even more so when she discovers yet another ironic twist about the father of her baby. She is reminded of past events which led to her

father's death and how tragic life can be; was he really her father though?

Then Kala makes a shocking discovery in talking to another victim of the abducting duo: there is actually a third man out there involved in the abductions and sex-trafficking, and he is the mastermind behind it all. Kala takes on a Joan of Arc persona to prepare for battle and to defend her tears, suffering, rage and honor! Will she come face to face with the third abductor? Will she survive and ever be happy again?

Review: This is a masterpiece of a novel. I truly enjoyed reading it and hung onto every word as if it were the last. The author has a talent in knowing how to keep a reader hanging on for more. **Voices** is a suspenseful and complex book, filled with ironic twists, excitement, and thrills. The reader is able to get inside of Kala's head and know her most secret thoughts and desires. Memmott uses the perfect descriptive words and details to make the reader feel as though he or she is there witnessing the events unfold. I couldn't help cheering Kala on, even though I didn't always agree with the choices she was making.

Not only is this novel a compelling read, it also makes us think about life and how coincidences can catch us off guard and change our lives forever, forcing us to make choices we would not normally make. I absolutely loved this novel and feel that I have taken away a little piece of 'Joan of Arc' to put inside my soul.