



Reading Guide:

***Jefferson's Daughters: Three Sisters, White and Black, in a Young America* (2018) by Catherine Kerrison**

1. Dr. Catherine Kerrison focuses on the lives of Thomas Jefferson's daughters while also placing them in the context of the history of women in the new Republic more generally. What was new to you in the book? What connected with other books you or we have read?
2. *Jefferson's Daughters* covers a lot of ground, literally and figuratively. What parts of the book did you think worked best? Which did not work for you?
3. Thomas Jefferson is one of the most documented and studied members of the Founder generation, but looking at him from the perspective of his daughters is fairly unusual for Jefferson scholarship. Did anything you learned change your opinion of him? Why?
4. Historians have very different types of sources available to learn about Jefferson's White daughters, Martha and Maria, and his Black daughter, Harriet. How well do you think Kerrison succeeded in telling their stories? What makes you say that?
5. What is the most important information or perspective you will take away from this book? Do you think it matches the author's intentions? What did you learn about race and gender in early America from reading this book?
6. What questions do you have after reading this book? What do you want to learn more about?
7. Would you recommend this book to others? Who do you think the ideal reader for this book would be?

Author Biography

Catherine Kerrison is a professor of history at Villanova University, where she teaches courses in Colonial and Revolutionary America and women's and gender history. She holds a PhD in American history from the College of William & Mary. Her first book, *Claiming the Pen: Women and Intellectual Life in the Early American South*, won the Outstanding Book Award from the History of Education Society.

Related Books (descriptions courtesy of Amazon.com)

► For a similar story with a Texas connection:

Tomlinson Hill: The Remarkable Story of Two Families Who Share the Tomlinson Name—One White, One Black (2014) by Chris Tomlinson

A masterpiece of authentic American history, *Tomlinson Hill* traces the true and very revealing story of these two families. From the beginning in 1854—when the first Tomlinson, a White woman, arrived—to 2007, when the last Tomlinson, LaDainian’s father, left, the book unflinchingly explores the history of race and bigotry in Texas. Along the way it also manages to disclose a great many untruths that are latent in the unsettling and complex story of America.

► To learn more about slavery and family in early America:

For Adam’s Sake: A Family Saga in Colonial New England (2013) by Allegra di Bonaventura

Joshua Hempstead was a well-respected farmer and tradesman in New London, Connecticut. As his remarkable diary—kept from 1711 until 1758—reveals, he was also a slave owner who owned Adam Jackson for more than thirty years. In this engrossing narrative of family life and the slave experience in the colonial North, Allegra di Bonaventura describes the complexity of this master/slave relationship and traces the intertwining stories of two families until the eve of the Revolution.

► An exploration of slavery on a Northern plantation:

The Manor: Three Centuries at a Slave Plantation on Long Island (2013) by Mac Griswold

Formerly encompassing all of Shelter Island, New York, a pearl of 8,000 acres caught between the North and South Forks of Long Island, Sylvester Manor had dwindled to 243 acres. Still, its hidden vault proved to be full of revelations and treasures, including the 1666 charter for the land, and correspondence from Thomas Jefferson. Most notable was the short and steep flight of steps the family had called the “slave staircase,” which would provide clues to the extensive but little-known story of Northern slavery.

► A different perspective on race and gender in early America:

The Chinese Lady: Afong Moy in Early America (2019) by Nancy E. Davis

In 1834, a young Chinese woman named Afong Moy arrived in America, her bound feet stepping ashore in New York City. She was both a prized guest and advertisement for a merchant firm—a promotional curiosity used to peddle exotic wares from the East. Over the next few years, she would shape Americans’ impressions of China even as she assisted her merchant sponsors in selling the largest quantities of Chinese goods yet imported for the burgeoning American market. Afong Moy became a subject of poetry, a trendsetter for hair styles and new fashions, and a lucky name for winning racehorses. She met Americans face to face in cities and towns across the country, appearing on local stages to sell and to entertain. Yet she also moved in high society, and was the first Chinese guest to be welcomed to the White House.

Bayou Bend/Rienzi Book Club

Join us for the next Bayou Bend/Rienzi Book Club featuring *Handel in London: The Making of a Genius* by Jane Glover on Wednesday, March 9, 2022, at 1:30 p.m. hosted by Rienzi.

For more information, visit mfah.org/historybookclub.

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