

# Women's Prize for Fiction 2019

## Reading Group Guide

### *The Silence of the Girls* by Pat Barker

Hamish Hamilton

Also by Pat Barker:  
*Union Street* (1982)  
*Blow Your House Down*  
(1984)  
*The Century's Daughter*  
(1986)  
*The Man Who Wasn't  
There* (1988)  
*Regeneration* (1991)

*The Eye in the Door*  
(1993)  
*The Ghost Road* (1995)  
*Another World* (1998)  
*Border Crossing* (2001)  
*Double Vision* (2003)  
*Life Class* (2007)  
*Toby's Room* (2012)  
*Noonday* (2015)

#### About the book

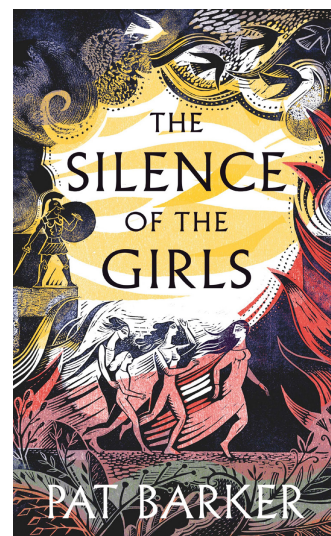
There was a woman at the heart of the Trojan war whose voice has been silent – till now.

Briseis was a queen until her city was destroyed. Now she is slave to Achilles, the man who butchered her husband and brothers. Trapped in a world defined by men, can she survive to become the author of her own story?

Discover the greatest Greek myth of all – retold by the witness history forgot.

#### About the author

Pat Barker was born in Yorkshire and began her literary career in her forties, when she took a short writing course taught by Angela Carter. Encouraged by Carter to continue writing and exploring the lives of working class women, she sent her fiction out to publishers. Thirty-five years later, she has published fifteen novels, including her masterful *Regeneration* Trilogy, been made a CBE for services to literature, and won awards including the Guardian Fiction Prize and the UK's highest literary honour, the Booker Prize. She lives in Durham and her latest novel is *The Silence of the Girls*.



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## Questions and discussion points

1. Achilles is usually seen as a hero, but from the beginning of the book this image is challenged. What kind of person is he presented as and does he have any heroic qualities?
2. Briseis is barely mentioned in Homer's *Iliad*. Why do you think Barker chose to write this story from her perspective? Do you think it's important for well-known stories to be told from different viewpoints?
3. What do you think of the way the gods are incorporated into the story?
4. What does the book have to say about how women and their bodies are used during wartime?

## Suggested reading

*The Iliad* by Homer

*For the Most Beautiful* by Emily Hauser

*The Children of Jocasta* by Natalie Haynes

*House of Names* by Colm Tóibín

*The Memoirs of Helen of Troy* by Amanda Elyot

## Useful links

[The Silence of the Girls by Pat Barker review – a feminist Iliad](#)

[The Silence of the Girls by Pat Barker: a stunning new novel](#)

[The Silence of Classical Literature's Women](#)

[The War on Women: Pat Barker's \*The Silence of the Girls\*](#)

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