



## The Stars Are Fire

*Anita Shreve*

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## **The Stars Are Fire** Anita Shreve

In October 1947, after a summer-long drought, fires break out all along the Maine coast from Bar Harbor to Kittery and are soon racing out of control from town to village. Five months pregnant, Grace Holland is left alone to protect her two toddlers when her husband, Gene, joins the volunteer firefighters. Along with her best friend, Rosie, and Rosie's two young children, Grace watches helplessly as their houses burn to the ground, the flames finally forcing them all into the ocean as a last resort. They spend the night frantically protecting their children and in the morning find their lives forever changed: homeless, penniless, awaiting news of their husbands' fate, and left to face an uncertain future in a town that no longer exists. In the midst of this devastating loss, Grace discovers glorious new freedoms--joys and triumphs she could never have expected her narrow life with Gene could contain--and her spirit soars. Then the unthinkable happens and Grace's bravery is tested as never before.

## **The Stars Are Fire Details**

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Author : Anita Shreve

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## From Reader Review The Stars Are Fire for online ebook

### ?Karen says

Man, I didn't realize how much I have missed Anita Shreve until I started this book this morning and finished it tonight. It is that good. I enjoyed Grace's story tremendously.

Grace is a thoughtful young woman feeling confused and trapped in what I would call an odd marriage, when the Maine coast is set ablaze one particularly dry autumn. Wildfires wreak devastation for miles. Everyone Grace knows is affected by the fires, by the huge losses, and by the kindness of strangers. This is how she survives and comes into her own. Her husband is missing and it gives her time to consider a different kind of future for herself and her children.

Wonderful female characters make up most of the cast -- women you just want to cheer on or give them a hug. I was just a little disappointed by the Epilogue, but I definitely do recommend. 4.75 stars.

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### Brenda - Traveling Sister says

I started off giving The Stars are Fire 4 stars, however while writing my review I realized that there was a few things that were missing for me or did not really work for me.

When we first meet Grace Holland she is in a dutiful and loveless marriage to sour Gene who is a man of few words. The setting is based on the real life fires from October 1947 that raged in Maine following months of severe drought. I thought Anita Shreve gave me a good feel of the daily life in 1947 and the impact the fires had on Grace's life. The fires left quiet and meek Grace Holland alone with her children and homeless. She becomes brave, resilient, and resourceful as she rewrites her life for herself and her family. I found myself rooting for Grace as she discovers new freedom and finds joy in her life.

All the other characters all seemed like an uninteresting "type" to me with no depth or development. I wanted to learn, understand and have some more insight to why Gene was so sour and angry with little words to share. Even though Gene was a menacing character, I found I had no emotions towards him whether it be dislike, sympathy or anger. I wanted more from his character.

I enjoyed Shreve's writing and Grace's story as she goes through the devastation and finds the courage to create a new life. It was not an absorbing read for me but a comfort read with a satisfying ending.

All of Norma's & my reviews can be found on our Sister Blog:  
<http://www.twogirlslostinacouleereadi...>

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### Kasa Cotugno says

Oh dear. I'm afraid I'm just the wrong audience for this book. After a strong beginning, it devolved into just another romantic fairy tale. Its strengths lay in the depiction of the devastating coastal fires that ravaged a drought-ridden Maine in 1947. Despite some glaring anachronisms, the era is well represented, and Grace is

truly a woman of that age. There were several jarring mistakes in what followed, and half way in, I found myself skimming over too much attention to clothes and not enough to character.

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### **Phrynne says**

This one started off slowly and it took a little while for me to engage with it, but then suddenly I found myself in that wonderful state of being so involved I did not even notice when people were talking to me. Grace is a superb character, someone who lives within the narrow confines of her life until circumstances demand that she step up and step up she does! The scene where she saves her children's lives by holding them in the sea as a huge wildfire burns down the town is amazing, as is the way she builds herself back up after the fire. I found myself longing for her to succeed and find herself the life she deserved. And then that brilliant ending - loved it!

This was just my second Anita Shreve novel but I can tell I have found a new favourite author.

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### **Carolyn says**

In October 1947, the biggest fires in Maine's history swept through the state burning for two weeks and destroying over 1200 homes and holiday houses. With this as backdrop, Anita Shreve has crafted her story of Grace Holland, a wife and mother of two, caught up in the fires and spat out to reinvent herself in the aftermath. Before the fires, Grace was a typical woman of her times, rearing her children in a tiny cottage, cooking and washing for her husband in a loveless marriage. Her best friend Rosie lived next door and each day they would take time out to enjoy each others company while their children played together. After the horrendous day of the fire when Grace and Rosie were forced to take their children into the ocean to survive, Grace waits for her husband to return from fire fighting and wonders how they will cope now that they are homeless and penniless.

Anita Shreve has painted Grace as a fierce survivor, a woman who will adapt and cope with whatever adversity life throws in her way to keep her children safe. Along the way she discovers her own strength and bravery and learns what it is to really love another. A beautiful story of rebirth in the aftermath of catastrophic fires.

*With thanks to NetGalley and the publisher Little Brown for a copy to read and review*

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### **Mischenko says**

To see this review and others please visit [www.readrantrockandroll.com](http://www.readrantrockandroll.com)

*The Stars Are Fire* by Anita Shreve is a novel of fiction that takes place around the disastrous fire that ravaged Maine's coast in 1947. This is the first book I've read by this author. I listened to this on audible and enjoyed the narrator, Suzanne Elite Freeman.

### **May contain a mild spoiler...**

The main character, Grace Holland, is suffering with a less than mediocre marriage with little to no attention

from her husband, Gene. She enjoys her children, but really craves love and desire. A blazing fire heads toward the town and she must escape the area with her two children. All she has is her best friend as her husband Gene has left with the fire brigade to help control the fires.

As time moves on, Grace's husband is still missing and she must make a new life to care for her kids. She moves into her mother-in-laws house and finds some belongings to help get her feet on the ground and enjoys a new found job. Her mom is there and other characters come into the story, including a new love, but the story still remains quite bland. I appreciated that Grace was making a new life and enjoying new freedoms, but there wasn't enough going on to keep me interested and engaged. Even with the added twists, I found my mind wondering throughout the story.

It's possible the main issue with the book for me were the characters. All of them were flat and never really developed which made the story uninteresting for me. I really wanted more development with Aiden and less information about Graces job with the doc.

It seems like a good story, but just wasn't a fave and wound up in the okay range for me. I do think the author writes very well and I'm still looking forward to reading some of her other books.

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### **Laurie says**

The Stars Are Fire by Anita Shreve is a one sitting read. Once you pick up the book and read the first sentence, you will not want to or be able to put it down. A five star book of engaging historical fiction.

Shreve transports us to coastal Maine in 1947 where we meet Grace, a mother of two and married to Gene. Her best friend Rosie lives next door with her two children and husband Tim. All summer there has been a drought and now wildfires are raging across the state. Grace and Rosie's husbands have gone to fight the fire and left the women and children at home. The fire is escalating and the women must rely on their instincts to save their children and themselves. At this pivotal moment Grace's life is changed forever. Nothing she knew or depended on can help her when the winds of change come. Grace must now light the fire that has been buried deep inside of her in order to survive.

Grace is a character of deep emotions and resilience. In the beginning of the book she is very meek and quiet. In time we come to see her fierceness and drive that compels her to live. Rosie is another favorite character of mine. She is not quite as well developed, but I loved her from the beginning. She is everyones best friend and ally. My least favorite is Gene for many reasons. He is a self-centered egotistical man that cares nothing for his family!

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### **Stacey says**

I haven't read anything by Anita Shreve in a long time. One of my favorite women's fiction writers is back. Grace is in an unhappy, controlling marriage with two toddlers and one on the way. A fire breaks out and Gene, her husband, volunteers to help in the effort to get it under control. This was less about the Great Fires of 1947 and more about the resilience of a woman in 1947. 1947 is important because women weren't seen

as independent and capable. Grace is just that and determined.

When Gene doesn't return she is left with no money and no place to live after the fire took her home. Grace is resourceful and picks herself up. Along the way she makes valuable friendships and just when she has a comfortable living arrangement, Gene comes back. Cue Katy Perry's Roar:

I used to bite my tongue and hold my breath  
Scared to rock the boat and make a mess  
So I sit quietly, agree politely  
I guess that I forgot I had a choice  
I let you push me past the breaking point  
I stood for nothing, so I fell for everything

You held me down, but I got up  
Already brushing off the dust  
You hear my voice, you hear that sound  
Like thunder gonna shake the ground  
You held me down, but I got up  
Get ready 'cause I've had enough  
I see it all, I see it now

I got the eye of the tiger, a fighter, dancing through the fire  
'Cause I am a champion and you're gonna hear me roar  
Louder, louder than a lion

Now I'm floating like a butterfly  
Stinging like a bee I earned my stripes  
I went from zero, to my own hero

I wanted to see Grace succeed and find love and happiness. I will look forward to the next novel by Shreve.

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## Cindy Burnett says

4.5 stars

The Stars Are Fire is a beautifully written story that is both heart-breaking and ultimately redemptive. The story is based on the true story of the 1947 fire that burned a significant portion of Maine's coastal towns. As the book opens, Grace and her family live in a small coastal town that is in the midst of a drought. Grace struggles with the discontent she feels with her life and her husband. As the drought continues, the land becomes so dry that fire becomes a giant fear for Maine's residents. The fire begins fairly far away from Grace's town and skeptical that the fire will reach their town, residents are unprepared when the fire rapidly sweeps through and devastates the community. Grace saves herself, her children, her neighbor Rosie and her children but is left homeless and without a husband (Glen disappeared the night of the fire when he went to fight the fire). Brave and resilient, Grace builds a life for her family and spreads her wings as she was unable to do while Glen was around. When she finally feels that her life is on track, Grace is faced with yet another stumbling block and must force herself to survive.

Grace is a fantastic protagonist; she is intelligent, quick thinking, proactive and loyal. Trapped in a situation beyond her control, she manages to overcome the obstacles and persevere. The world could use more people like Grace.

My favorite thing by far about this book is Shreve's prose. Her writing is both elegant and stark. Shreve provides a fascinating window into Grace's mind; Grace is constantly wanting to know more than she learns from the news and her neighbors and frequently questioning why things are the way they are. Her constant questioning and thoughtful pondering added a different dimension to the novel and provoked a similar response from me as I view the incidents happening in my world. I also learned so much about Maine during that era and about the horrific fire that destroyed so many coastal towns. I like that Shreve provided that historical context for the story.

I definitely recommend *The Stars Are Fire* and love that the cover is so perfect for the story. Thanks to BookBrowse for the chance to read this ARC in exchange for an honest review.

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## **Dorie says**

Wow this is one special book! I was excited to read it so I had to jump ahead even though the pub date isn't until May.

This is by far the best book that Ms. Shreve has ever penned. The characters are so well developed and the story simply brilliant and believable, the factual part based on a true story of the worst fire ever to occur in coastal Maine.

Time frame is Maine in 1947. Grace is a young woman with two small children in an unhappy marriage. She is young and doesn't really understand her husband and why he treats her with so little love but she has her children and her best friend.

After an agonizing Spring of continued rain the rest of the summer is hot and very dry, drought conditions. A wildfire starts on the coast of Maine and becomes all consuming. The town where Grace lives is at first thought to be far enough away from the fire and isn't evacuated. Grace's husband is fighting the fire along with most of the men in the town. Grace uses all of her strength and intelligence to save herself and her children.

After the fire Grace and her children and mother have survived and relocate to her mother in law's house. There is a romantic encounter with another man who makes Grace realize all that she has been missing in her marriage.

There of course is a lot more to this wonderful story but I won't give away the plot. What I loved about this story was how the character grew, learned how to survive, what was important to her, how strong she really was!!

The ending was a great one with some answers about Grace's husband, his character and why he behaves the way he does. No, you won't even come close to guessing, so don't even try! Well you can try if you want to but it's a great REVEAL.

I read this book in two sittings, only because I had to go to bed. I recommend this book to everyone, read it, you won't be disappointed. Thank you to the publisher for the opportunity to read this awesome book!

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## Julie says

The Stars are Fire by Anita Shreve is a 2017 Random House publication.

I must confess, I had this book sitting on my TBR pile for a while, not in any big hurry to read it, until I heard the news of Anita Shreve's passing. I decided to do a blog post in her honor and wanted to include the first book I'd read of hers- "*The Pilot's Wife*" and thought it would be fitting, in a way, to feature the last book she published. So, while I was re-reading TPW, I slowly worked my way through this one, as well.

What captured my interest about this book, initially, was that it is centered around true events. In 1947 a massive fire in Maine burned over a quarter of a million acres of land, and destroyed many homes in its wake, leaving sixteen dead. I'd never heard about this fire until I read the synopsis of this book. After doing a few Google searches I was interested to see how Shreve would weave a story around such a monumental occurrence.

Grace Holland is in an unhappy marriage, the mother of two small children, with another one on the way, when her husband, Gene, volunteers to help fight the fire. He goes missing, presumed dead, leaving Grace, her children, and her mother to find a way to survive on their own.

Just when Grace is hitting stride, feeling more confident, enjoying the relief and release she feels without Gene, life throws Grace a curve ball she never saw coming.

**"Doubt thou the stars are fire; / Doubt thou the sun doth move; / Doubt truth to be a liar; / But never doubt I love." - Hamlet**

This story is not incredibly long, but due to its bleakness, which depicted the hardships that resulted from a horrific disaster, while detailing the limited options women had in the forties, it often felt like the story was moving at the speed of molasses.

However, I would advise readers to stick it out, because this is not a book that is meant to be a fast-paced novel of suspense or action. It's beautifully written piece and an amazing character study, focused on Grace Holland. Grace will go from being at the will and mercy of a cold, bitter husband, to finding the strength and courage to search for inner peace, and maybe even happiness, against all odds.

Women, especially, stayed in miserable marriages to avoid the stigma associated with divorce, and because of the lack of career opportunities. But, for Grace, duty and responsibility figure into things, as well. But, the book also points to how rigid, assigned roles, and duties also impacted men.

Gene might have felt trapped, and certainly felt intense pressure to provide for his family, which began to change him from a rather amiable sort, to a resentful, cold, and very bitter man. His anger soon manifests itself in very dangerous ways, which is where the marital tensions often become so taut, and so intense, it is nearly unbearable.

Yet out of the dust and burnt ash, this story emerges into one of great resilience and courage. Grace does the



best she can, takes risks, capitalizes on advantageous situations and is helped by good people and wonderful friends along the way. Even when she seems to hit rock bottom, with no way out of her misery, she rises to the occasion, determined to escape her physical and metaphorical incarceration.

While this book is mostly well-received, it did have a few mixed reviews, which gave me pause, but as is often the case, a book will speak to one in a very different way than it speaks to someone else, if at all.

For me, I was very impressed with Shreve's portrait of marriage during a time when people were basically forced to remain in an untenable relationship. I was in awe of her in depth creation of Grace Holland, who is ultimately a survivor, a person who is inspirational, determined to live life on her own terms and refuses to allow convention to dictate her destiny. Her journey is a long, labored trip, and is not going to end all wrapped up in a nice, neat package. This may bother some readers, but, I thought it was fitting and, did justice to Grace's character.

Having said that, one can't avoid the impression that Grace will reinvent herself, will be in control of her own destiny, embarking on a whole new adventure in life, no matter which path she winds up on or how things turn out.

In all honesty, based on the books I've read by this author, this one was not my all-time favorite, and I don't know that it's Shreve's best effort, but it is still a very solid, atmospheric and compelling novel. I really enjoyed the history, the writing, and the deep character study, and how the tragedy of the fire, ultimately provided a way for Grace to experience freedom and forge a new life for herself.

Overall, I thought this book was very thought provoking and would make a very good book club selection. This may be our last novel by Anita Shreve, and if that is the case, I'd say she left us with a very positive impression of her and her books.

4 stars

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## Veronica ?? says

The Stars are Fire was my first by Anita Shreve and whilst the writing its self was exceptional and beautiful to read the storyline let me down. I wasn't moved!

I had intended to write a huge spoiler ridden rant about the "convenience" of the plot but I hate spoilers in reviews so here is a condensed version.

Every event that happened throughout the story, even though at the time some seemed like great hardship, turned out to be very **convenient** to the storyline and so far removed from real life it just lost all credibility for me. It's very hard to elaborate more on this without spoilers.

I found Grace sullen and spoilt. Nothing pleased her and by the time I finished the book I actually disliked her immensely.

The ending was too well tied up as though the author didn't want to disappoint anyone.

I finished the book thinking I would still be happy to give Shreve another go as her writing is moving even if

the story wasn't. What should I try, any recommendations?

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## Jennifer says

★★★½

In *The Stars Are Fire*, Anita Shreve writes with a simple and minimal style but surprisingly succeeds at developing characters, a historical time period, a traumatizing setting, and a variety of relationships. This story follows the female lead character: Grace while life leads her through several situations and relationships that occur before, during, but mostly after a horrific state-wide fire. Some are happy and some severely unhappy, but the journey remains engaging through its entirety. I enjoyed watching Grace's resilience and growth in a time when women were not viewed as capable or independent apart from their husband. This element in particular was my favorite. This was the first time I have read this author, and overall, I enjoyed the experience. Check it out!

Note: *The Stars Are Fire* is a fictional story based on a nonfiction and tragic event: the Maine fires of 1947. If interested, you can learn more about this event [HERE](#).

### My favorite quote:

*"You have to stay," her mother says calmly.*

*"Why?"*

*"You're married. ... You made your bed," her mother adds.*

*"I didn't make this bed," Graces says.*

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## Ann Marie (Lit·Wit·Wine·Dine) says

You can read all of my reviews at [Lit·Wit·Wine·Dine](#).

Having never read any of Anita Shreve's earlier novels, I was drawn to *The Stars are Fire* because I enjoy learning about historical events I know little or nothing about. This events in this book unfold as a result of what has become know as the Great Fires of 1947, a series of forest fires that devastated hundreds of thousands of acres in Maine.

Grace Holland is five months pregnant when the fires rip through her neighborhood, destroying everything in their wake. Grace is smart and resourceful. She manages to save herself, her two small children, her best friend, Rosie, and Rosie's children. Her husband, Gene, with whom she shares a dispassionate though not horrible marriage, has been called to help the men of the town build a fire wall. But as the other men begin to return home, Gene remains missing. Finally, homeless and destitute, Grace is forced to consider moving into her recently deceased mother-in-law's home. As she arrives to check out the condition of the home, she is greeted by beautiful piano music. Enter Aiden, the handsome, educated, piano-playing squatter.

Things go along just swimmingly for a time. Grace gets a job at the local physician's office. Her mother, now living with her, cares for the house and the children. Grace and Aiden seem to be growing closer together.

When Aiden leaves for a job in Boston, they are both hopeful that it won't be the end. Unfortunately, a sudden (and somewhat expected, if I'm honest) plot twist occurs. You can probably see where this is going but I do not wish to add any spoilers.

Overall, I enjoyed the book quite a lot. This wasn't an edge-of-the seat book for me but I found the pacing to be steady and enjoyable. My rating is a reflection of the balance between fabulous writing and character development and a somewhat clichéd and predictable story. Though this wasn't a five star read for me, I can certainly understand why Anita Shreve has such a devoted following and I would be open to reading her past or future titles.

3.75/5 stars

Thanks to the publisher, Alfred A. Knopf, for providing me with a free copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Diane S ? says**

I always look forward to novels by this author, and this time it has felt like a very long wait. She writes such good stories about women, hemmed in by the expectations of their time periods, but women that find and harbor an inner strength that allows them to supersede and rise above their circumstances. Grace, the young wife and mother in this story is no exception.

The largest fire in Maine's history, October 1946, a fire that raged from Bar Harbor to Kittery. Grace, five months pregnant and her two children under three, are on their own. Her husband is fire fighting with a crew, and as the fire approaches she must save herself and her children. Parts of this novel were predictable but the history and the time period made this much more than just a predictable read. As always her characterizations are amazing, one pulls for Grace, suffers along with her and wishes her better things and an easier way than that which she faces. Her mother and her friend are also great characters.

This was an enjoyable read from an accomplished writer. A sentimental read on my part but I find that it is refreshing to read a novel that is set in only one time period and that doesn't go back and forth, just presented as we live life, in a forward manner. I look forward to the next strong woman this author will present to her readers.

ARC from publisher.

Publishes April 18th from Knopf.

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