

BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION GUIDE

The Sound of Silence

A romance short story by C.R. Lang

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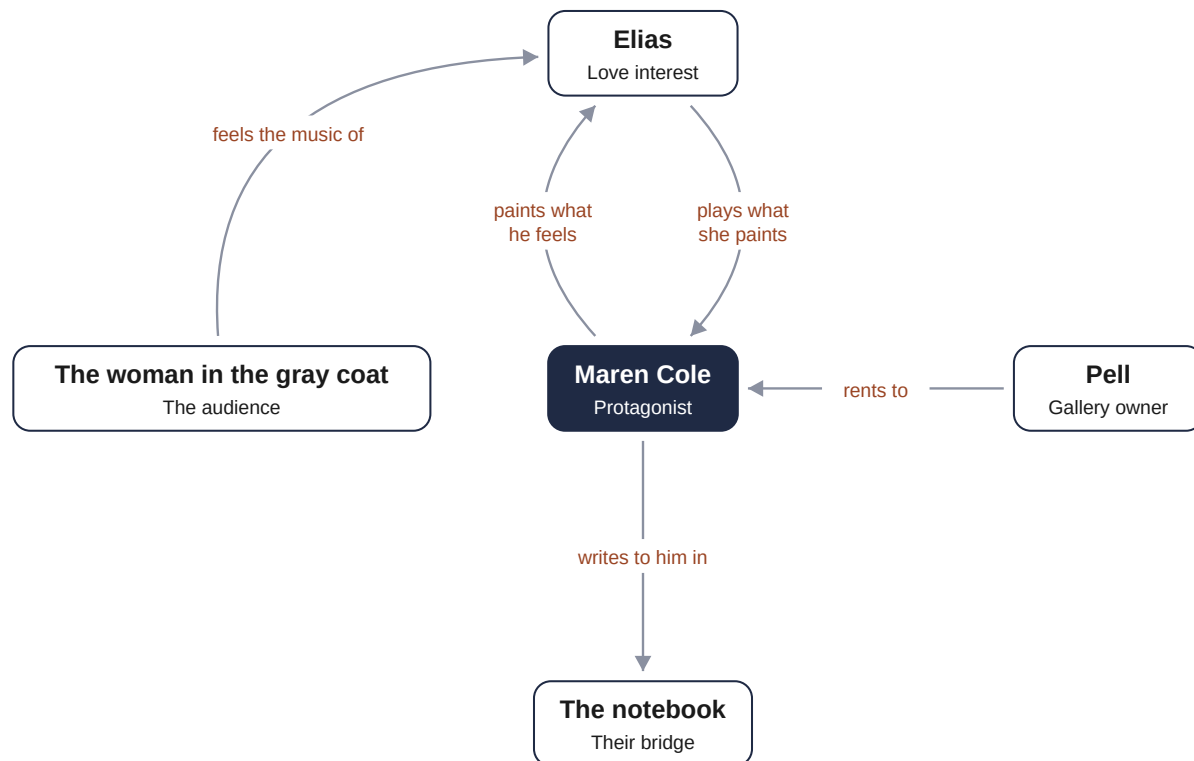
About the story

A painter who works in silence meets a deaf cellist who hears music through his hands. Together they build an exhibition that turns sound into color and color into sound.

This guide assumes everyone has finished the story, so it discusses the ending.

Character map

The main character is in the dark box. Arrows show who acts on whom.



Who's who

Maren Cole (Protagonist). A painter renting the back room of the Halloran Gallery for the winter.

Elias (Love interest). A cellist, deaf since a fever at eleven, who plays by feeling the vibrations.

Pell (Gallery owner). Brisk, skeptical, and surprised by what she finds.

The notebook (Their bridge). Passed back and forth like a ball, the first language they share.

The woman in the gray coat (The audience). A visitor whose face changes when she touches the panel.

Themes to look for

Being heard. ‘This is what it is to be heard.’ Hearing in this story is not about ears.

Translation between senses. Music becomes color, and painting becomes music.

Collaboration. Every piece is begun by one and finished by the other.

Assumptions. Maren is ashamed of being surprised that a deaf man is a musician.

Discussion questions

- 1 Maren likes silence because it lets her ‘hear her own hands.’ How does that idea prepare us for meeting Elias?
- 2 Why is Maren ashamed of being surprised that Elias is a musician? What assumptions does the story challenge?
- 3 What changes when Maren stops painting the cello and starts painting what Elias feels?
- 4 When Elias plays her painting, the music is ‘no longer his. It was hers, passed through him.’ What does that mean?
- 5 Pell calls it a silent exhibition. Maren says there’s ‘everything for the ear.’ Who is right?
- 6 Maren places Elias’s hand on her heart. How does the story turn the cello scene into a declaration of love?
- 7 Elias had known for weeks and ‘had simply been waiting for her to hear it.’ What did she need to hear?
- 8 How would you design an artwork for someone who experiences the world differently than you do?

Craft corner

For writers in the group: two ways to look at how the story is built.

Sensory detail. Find the passages that describe sound as touch or color. Which image stays with you?

Symbolism. What does the notebook come to stand for over the course of the story?

Try this together

Play a short piece of music with the volume off and a hand on the speaker, or just listen with eyes closed. Then have each person draw or describe the music as colors and shapes, and compare.

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