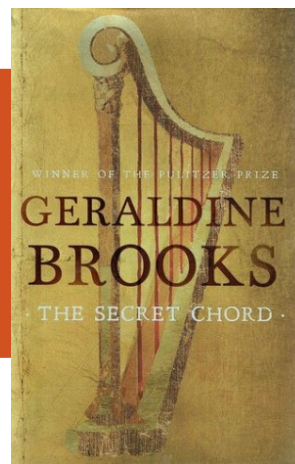




# The Secret Chord

Geraldine Brooks



## Author Background

Geraldine Brooks is an Australian-American journalist and author who grew up in the inner-west Sydney suburb of Ashfield. Following her graduation from The University of Sydney, Geraldine became a reporter for *The Sydney Morning Herald* and after winning a Greg Shackleton Memorial Scholarship, moved to New York City, USA, to complete a master's degree at Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism in 1983.

She married fellow journalist and writer, Tony Horwitz, in 1984.

Geraldine has worked as a foreign correspondent for *The Wall Street Journal*, covering crises in Africa, the Balkans, the Middle East and the Persian Gulf. In 1990, Geraldine and her husband won the Overseas Press Club Award for best coverage of the Gulf War.

Her first novel, *The Year of Wonders* (2001), became an international bestseller. Winning the Pulitzer Prize in 2006, her second novel, *March* (2005), was inspired by her fondness for Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*. In 2008 she published *People of the Book*, which won both the Australian Book of the Year Award and the Australian Literary Fiction Award. Next came *Caleb's Crossing* (2011) followed by *The Secret Chord* in 2015.

Geraldine and her late husband had two sons. Geraldine lives on Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, USA, and visits Australia frequently.

## Book Summary

*The Secret Chord* provides new context for some of the best-known episodes of the Old Testament's King David during the Second Iron Age in Israel. The book also focuses on other events in this period, some even more remarkable and emotionally intense, that have been neglected in history.

Anointed as the chosen one when just a young shepherd boy, David will rise to be king, grasping the throne and establishing his empire. But his journey is a tumultuous one and the consequences of his choices will resound for generations. In a life that arcs from obscurity to fame, he is by turns hero and traitor, glamorous young tyrant and beloved king, murderous despot and remorseful, diminished patriarch.

We see David through the eyes of those who love him or fear him: from the prophet Natan, the courtier and prophet who both counsels and castigates David, to his wives Mikhal, Avigail, and Batsheva, and finally to Solomon, the late-born son who redeems his Lear-like old age.

In this book, Geraldine Brooks transforms characters from history, creating an enthralling story about faith, desire, family, ambition, betrayal and power.

## Discussion Questions

- ❖ Natan's first prophecy spares him from certain death but also sets him apart from other men. Is his ability a gift or a curse?
- ❖ How does David's childhood inform your understanding of the man he will become?
- ❖ What might it mean that God chose to bestow so much upon a man as imperfect as David?
- ❖ Do you believe that some people are chosen to speak in God's name? What role do prophets play in the events of man?
- ❖ Would David make a good leader today? Why or why not?
- ❖ What is David's worst crime? His greatest achievement?
- ❖ Which of David's wives do you believe suffered the most at his hands? Did he love Yonatan more than any of them? If so, why might that be?
- ❖ How well does Geraldine Brooks capture David's era and his essence?
- ❖ David is a man driven by passion and violence, but he loves God with equal fervour. How would you explain this?
- ❖ What is the nature of Natan's feelings toward David? Would you be able to serve a man like him?
- ❖ What is "the secret chord"? Why did Brooks choose this phrase as the novel's title?

## References

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- ❖ Wikipedia - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geraldine\\_Brooks\\_\(writer\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geraldine_Brooks_(writer))
- ❖ Geraldine Brooks - <http://geraldinebrooks.com/geraldine-brooks/>
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