

# Special Women's History and Culture Month Event!

Sign up for a New York Times Faculty/Student Pass and Join SUNY Broome's Women's Discussion Group (WDG) on Tuesday March 9, 2021 at 10:00 am for a campus Zoom discussion **and again** at 7:00 pm for a special **New York Times online event on a major voice from the Harlem Renaissance**

**Step One:** If you have a New York Times online access pass, go right to the following link to register for the New York Times T Club event at 7:00 pm: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/admin/live-events.html> and also join the WDG on Tuesday March 9 at 10:00 am for a campus Zoom discussion at this Zoom link: <https://zoom.us/j/92725765094>

**Step Two:** if you do not have a NYT access pass, go to <http://sunnybroome.info/library/databases/new-york-times-digital-edition> and get one and then register for the NYT 7:00 pm event at: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/admin/live-events.html> and join the WDG on Tuesday March 9 at 10:00 am for a campus Zoom discussion at this Zoom link: <https://zoom.us/j/92725765094>

**Step Three:** If you do not choose to attend the NYT event at 7:00 pm, then join the WDG on Tuesday March 9 at 10:00 am. at this Zoom link: <https://zoom.us/j/92725765094>

**Step Four:** Go to links, below, for a free print copy of *Passing* and a free audio copy of *Passing* along with a Yale Library Archive photo and bio of author Nella Larsen

T Book Club: A Discussion on *Passing* by Nella Larsen

on Tuesday, March 9 at 7:00 pm E.T. | 4:00 pm P.T.

### **Details from the New York Times on This Event:**

*The third title selected for T Magazine's book club, Nella Larsen's **Passing** (1929) tells the story of two old friends, both Black women, who reunite in 1920s Harlem, despite the fact that one of them is living as a white person. Critically acclaimed at the time of its publication, the novel captures the social anxieties that plagued America during the Great Migration and remains a resonant portrait of a fractured nation.*

On March 9, watch a virtual discussion of the book, featuring the novelist **Brit Bennett** in conversation with T features director **Thessaly La Force**, that will address questions from readers. And, in the weeks leading up to the event, look for articles on "Passing" at [tmagazine.com](http://tmagazine.com). We hope you'll read along — and R.S.V.P. above. . (Share this free event with friends: <https://nyti.ms/2Mokx39> Please reach out to [timesevents@nytimes.com](mailto:timesevents@nytimes.com) if you have any questions).

### **How to Get Your New York Times Faculty or Student FREE 1 year pass**

New York Times online: Go

to: <http://sunybroome.info/library/databases/new-york-times-digital-edition>

### **More Information on NY Times T Club Membership**

T Book Club, NY Times, *Passing by Nella Larsen* Tuesday March 9 at 7:00 pm. No charge for participation in the club as long as you have your free one year pass

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/11/10/t-magazine/book-club.html>

### **More Information on the Campus WDG Zoom discussion on Tuesday March 9 at 10:00 am.**

SUNY Broome Women's Discussion Group Zoom Discussion of *Passing* will take place on Tuesday March 9 at 10:00 am. Whether or not you attend the New York Times T Club book discussion of *Passing* at 7:00 pm on March 9, join our Women's Discussion Group Zoom discussion of *Passing* on Tuesday March 9 at 10:00 am at the following

Zoom link: <https://zoom.us/j/92725765094>

Upon attendance at our Zoom discussion of this Harlem Renaissance writer, your name will **be included in our media release of this event.**

Link to Free Print Copy of *Passing*

<http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=miun.aat2524.0001.001&view=image&seq=9>

Link to Free YouTube LibriVox Audio of *Passing* by Nella Larsen read by Elizabeth Klett-  
*Full Audio Book*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dtqgq8sIQs0>

**Sponsored by:**

SUNY Broome Women's Discussion Group Club

Great Books Discussion Group

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Department of History, Philosophy and Social Sciences



**Information about Nella Larsen, Harlem Renaissance Writer, from  
Yale Library Archive. All credit to Yale Library Archive.**

*The daughter of a white Danish mother and a black West Indian father, novelist Nella Larsen explores the **complex issues of racial identity and identification in her fiction.** Though critics remain conflicted about her novels, *Quicksand* (1928)*

*and Passing (1929), there can be no question that they are significant, groundbreaking American literary texts. Larsen received a number of awards for her writing; in 1930, she was the first black woman to receive a **Guggenheim Fellowship for creative writing**. Along with her contemporary, novelist Zora Neale Hurston, Larsen is considered to be one of the most important female voices of the Harlem Renaissance.*

*Born in Chicago, Larsen lost her father when she was a child and her mother married a Dane. Though Larsen stated that she lived in Denmark as a teenager and that she returned to that country to attend the University of Copenhagen, some scholars argue that there is no documentary evidence to support these claims. She did, however study at Fisk University, the Lincoln Hospital Training Program where she studied nursing, and the New York Public Library's librarian training program. Through the height of her writing career Larsen worked as a nurse and as a children's librarian at the 135th Street Branch of the New York Public Library.*

*Carl Van Vechten was an early supporter of Larsen's work; "Who discovered this writer?" asked Thelma Berlack in the Amsterdam News, "Carl Van Vechten—and in her living room is an autographed photograph of him." I Van Vechten introduced Nella Larsen to his publishers, Blanche and Alfred Knopf, who later issued both her novels. Larsen and Van Vechten shared a warm friendship throughout the 1920s, when both were highly visible members of Harlem's literary community.*

***Quicksand**, Larsen's first novel, was inspired in part by her experiences as a mixed-race woman in Harlem, the southern United States, and abroad. The novel's main character, Helga Crane, is the daughter of a white mother and black father. She faces hypocrisy and prejudice and her efforts to fit into various white and black communities are unsuccessful. The novel won the Harmon Foundation prize and the praise of contemporary critics and readers.*

*Larsen's **second novel, Passing**, is also concerned with the complexities of racial identity. Passing is the story of Clare Kendry, a mixed race woman who passes for white and marries a white man. Eventually, however, Clare risks her husband's discovery of her true identity because she feels compelled to go to Harlem and spend time with African Americans. Like Helga Crane, Clare is a woman who feels*

marginalized in both white and black communities. *Passing* was not as well received by critics as *Quicksand*; nevertheless, many agreed with one unsigned review which remarked that *Passing* was “an earnest and courageous attempt to deal with the whole theme, not just part of it selected as suitable for racial defense or propaganda.”<sup>2</sup> Because of its subject matter, the novel was widely read, in spite of the mixed reviews it received. **The controversy over the idea that some African Americans might pass for white is evident in an advertisement for the novel: “Every woman who ‘passes’ is a possible storm center. Nella Larsen knows her subject and around this sensational question she has written a fast-moving, action-filled story that will startle both Negroes and whites.”**<sup>3</sup>

Larsen began but never completed a third novel. In spite of her literary success, she went back to nursing and spent the next thirty years working at a Brooklyn hospital. The success of *Quicksand* and *Passing* speaks to Larsen’s potential as a novelist and suggests that had she continued to write, she would likely have developed ever-greater skill. Though her books were out of print for some time, in recent years she has regained a reputation as a writer whose work reveals the complexity of her subject with both sensitivity and clarity.