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## A Piece of the World

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### Abstract

A Piece of the World by Christina Baker Kline tells the fictionalized story of Christina Olson, model for the Andrew Wyeth painting Christina's World.

### Keywords

book review, Christina's World, Andrew Wyeth, Christina Olson, Christina Baker Kline

### Cover Page Footnote

Works Cited Pols, Mary. "The Work of Recreating 'Christina's World'." Portland Press Herald (Portland, ME) Sep 3, 2017.



# BOOK REVIEW

## A Piece of the World

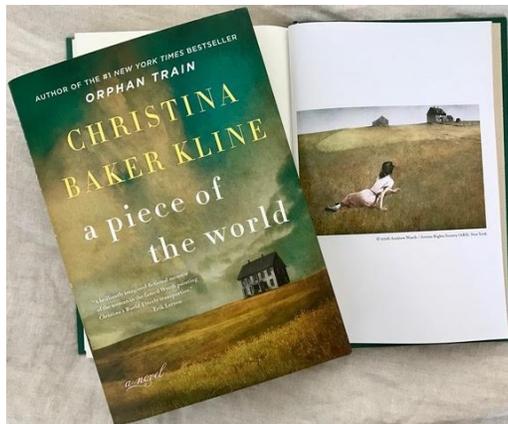
Christina Baker Kline

William Morrow, 2017, \$27.99

This novel tells the life story of Christina Olson, subject of the painting "Christina's World" by Andrew Wyeth. I hesitated to begin this book because I was not sure I wanted to know the "true" story – even the fictionalized "true" story. Especially if it would replace what I imagine the story to be, and that changes every time I look at the painting. I need not have worried. I thoroughly enjoyed this book. It is a perfect blend of beautiful writing and compelling subject matter. The author is able to draw the characters (not just Christina) in such a way as to reveal their essence, yet leave room for ambiguity. Just as Andrew Wyeth does with his painting. You may be able to predict where a plot line is going, but it still breaks your heart when you get there.

The pace of this novel is slow, matching the pace of Christina's life. It forces the reader to take a deep breath, slow down, and look closer at the ordinary to see the deeper meaning. The author herself faced challenges in writing this story: "It was a complicated book because nothing happens in her life. She is increasingly incapacitated and never leaves her home. So I had to craft a story out of basically nothing," (Pols ).

Yet something DID happen. Christina Olson became the model for an iconic American painting, and it changed her life. It also changed Andrew Wyeth's life, as the painting was extremely popular from the start. In painting his friend Christina as he saw her, the artist captured not only her vulnerability, but also the dignity that transcended her disability.



Greenville has a long association with the Wyeths. The Greenville County Museum of Art (GCMA) first opened to the public on March 9, 1974. The opening exhibit included their small permanent collection of contemporary American art and a major retrospective exhibition of

N.C. Wyeth (father of Andrew Wyeth, and a well-known illustrator). In 1978, GCMA mounted "Andrew Wyeth in Southern Collections" to record crowds. Other exhibits during that time period featured artists from the Brandywine district of Pennsylvania where Wyeth lived and worked. In 1979, Holly and Arthur McGill purchased an extraordinary collection of paintings and drawings by Andrew Wyeth. This acquisition is especially notable, as the collection had been owned by movie producer Joseph E. Levine and his wife, who also once owned the Olson House. The collection was exhibited in 1979; four of the paintings are relevant to Christina's World.

This year marks the 70th anniversary of Andrew Wyeth painting Christina's World, as well as the 50th anniversary of the death of Christina Olson. Reading this book is a great way to honor both the artist and the model of this extraordinary painting. Follow this link to an annotated bibliography of sources, including those listed by the author:

[https://works.bepress.com/jan\\_comfort/35/download/](https://works.bepress.com/jan_comfort/35/download/)

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