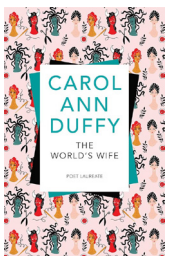
Best Reads for Women's History Month

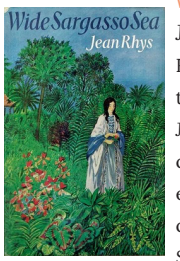
Lucy Riddell (she/her)



The World's Wife

Carol Ann Duffy

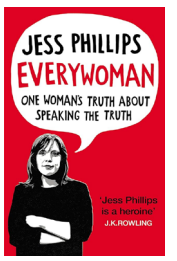
Each poem reverses patriarchal storytelling by giving voice to women behind famous men. From the exasperated humour of Darwin's wife battling her husband's monkey obsession, to Greek goddess Demeter as she pines for her abducted daughter, Duffy humanises these women who have for too long been relegated in the histories of men



Wide Sargasso Sea

Jean Rhys

Rhys tells the unsung story of Bertha Mason, the infamous 'madwoman in the attic' from *Jane Eyre*. Bertha's experience as a British colonial subject in the West Indies is finally explored, as well as how womanhood and class affects this. I love *Jane Eyre*, but *Wide Sargasso Sea* refreshingly gives Bertha her long-overdue recognition as a character



Everywoman: One Woman's Truth About Speaking the Truth

Jess Phillips

The memoir by the self-proclaimed 'gobby MP' is both sobering and empowering. Phillips tells all, taking us through her childhood, school, work at a women's crisis centre and everything that shaped the feminist figure she is. Her writing is raw, calling all women to speak out and fight

Off West End Review
Cruel Intentions

Sophie Layton (she/her)

What do you do when you need a nostalgic 90s kick? You could always listen to some of the songs you enjoyed from that period...or you can throw caution to the wind and go for something more sinister, something darker. Something a bit more...cruel.

Cruel Intentions tells the story of step-siblings Christian and Kathryn who spend their days messing with everyone else's lives. With Christian looking to get back at therapist Mrs Caldwell and the arrival of devout abstinent student Annette, the siblings make a pact for Christian to try and seduce Annette into bed, and break her beliefs. But as the two form an unlikely friendship, Christian's attitudes are fundamentally shaken, as his sister breathes down his neck to get the deal done.

I have never seen the film that this musical was based on. But if it's anything like its stage adaptation, I'm quite content to have not seen it. There were standout elements of this production for sure, the lighting design for one was very imaginative, even if it did feel very similar to *Sunset Boulevard* at times. The choreography was mostly fun. And then there's the plot. The musical was, of course, constrained by the subject matter it was working off of, but the plot felt very slow-moving, with nothing particularly exciting happening...until the final scene or two where so much happens in ten minutes it feels rushed. The musical wasn't bad per se, but it absolutely wasn't anything special from where I was sitting, with the soundtrack just being filled with covers of famous pop songs, rather than reimagining them as other successful jukebox musicals do so well.



Rose Galbraith as Cecile Caldwell was by far the performance of the evening, giving a genuine but sweet naivety that you couldn't help but empathise with. She is one of the shining beacons within this production, and her understanding of character make her feel like a genuine person caught up in this trouble. Also giving a hilarious performance was Josh Barnett as Blaine Tuttle who was simply queer, fabulous and entertaining whenever they were on stage, giving this musical the comedic reprieve it needs!

Sadly, *Cruel Intentions* was not the shining musical I had hoped for when I saw it advertised. It certainly had good elements within it, but the overall lack of a cohesive storyline and unimaginative soundtrack let the production down on arguably the two most important elements in a musical adaptation. The show has potential, but in its current form left a lot to be desired

Rating: ★★☆☆☆

Cruel Intentions is playing at The Other Palace until May 19th





From left to right – Rose Galbraith as Cecile Caldwell/Marci Greenbaum & Josh Barnett as Blaine Tuttle/Court Reynolds. Image Credit: Cruel Intentions the Musical

Government extends Theatre Tax Relief

Sophie Layton (she/her)

The government has announced that a previously temporary theatre tax relief programme has been made permanent. Announced as part of the Spring Budget in the House of Commons, Chancellor Jeremy Hunt confirmed that Theatre Tax Relief funding would become permanent.

Speaking during the Budget statement, Hunt said: "I particularly want to recognise the contribution of our creative industries and the tourism that comes from orchestras, museums, galleries and theatres. In the pandemic, we introduced higher 45% and 50% levels of tax relief, which were due to end in March 2025. They have been a lifeline for performing arts across the country."

He continued: "I can announce that I am making those tax reliefs permanent at 45% for touring and orchestral productions, and 40% for non-touring productions. Lord [Andrew] Lloyd Webber says that this will be a once-in-a-generation transformational change that will ensure Britain remains the global capital of creativity".

The changes permanently reduce the total tax paid to the government for productions, which is largely accepted to be incredibly valuable to an industry still struggling from the Cost of Living crisis and Covid-19 pandemic. Following the Budget, The Society of London Theatre & U.K. Theatre welcomed the move by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with



Credit: The Independent

Eleanor Lloyd, the President of the Society of London Theatre saying: "Today's announcement will enable us to unlock further private investment, and result in more and bigger productions... Making the relief permanent prevents the cliff-edge of the TTR taper, which... would have shrunk the theatre sector by almost a third".

Despite the reaction from the Opposition Labour Party being negative towards the Budget motion, Leader of the Opposition Keir Starmer did welcome this move, giving a short acknowledgement in his response: "It is welcome to hear the tax relief on performing arts and theatres being made permanent. I notice that the Ambassador Theatre Group, which owns one of the largest theatres in Torbay, the Princess, welcomes that measure".

Whilst many details of the Budget will be fiercely debated by politicians and the wider public for many weeks afterwards, this move has been received positively by almost all, with many in the creative industries thankful for the Chancellor's decision

The 2024 Spring Budget was delivered in The House of Commons on March 6th