

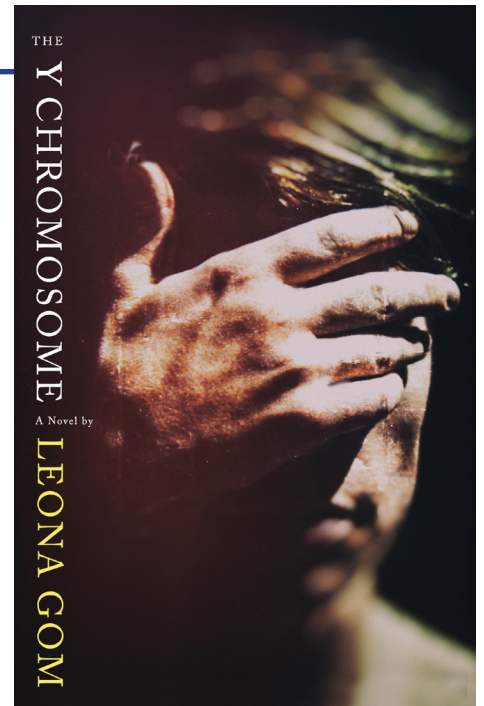
# READER'S GUIDE

## *The Y Chromosome* by Leona Gom

### INTRODUCING *The Y Chromosome*

*The Y Chromosome* challenges the reader to meet an all-woman society of the future. The few remaining men live in hiding. When one of these men, Daniel, is discovered by a historian name Delacour while attending University in disguise, the resulting conflict threatens both worlds.

The futurist society was developed by necessity and is far from perfect, but it now abhors and fears its male-dominated past, where violence escalated to an extreme. The journals of a man who lived during The Change reveal the desperate turmoil and anger of a world facing the extinction of half its members. The journals are now part of university history courses, leading to assessments of the past that are both ironic and disturbing.



### IMPORTANT THEMES

**Gender** – Daniel is forced to live in hiding, concealing his maleness for fear of the reaction of a society that has learned to hate its maleness. He fears any anger or impulse to violence knowing that it means what he's always been taught is true: that men were dangerous and naturally prone to aggression. Gom calls to question whether a person's nature is rooted in their gender or external forces.

**Parenthood/Mentorship** – Gom gives readers different examples of parenthood, and how parents shape the people that the characters become. Daniel's rearing in a community has groomed him to take a place of leadership. By contrast, Delacour had a cold and distant relationship with her parent, and she has learned to place her own needs above others.

**Responsibility** – Daniel must choose between his responsibility to his community or his desire to pursue his own goals. Delacour's natural pregnancy forces her to confront where her responsibility lies. To her scholarship? Or to keeping Daniel and his people safe?

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The journals paint a terrifying picture of what life during The Change was like, and remain one of the authority texts on males. Discuss how the journals impact the construction of maleness by the post-Change world.
2. Post-Change, the world has adopted communal living. What does this imply about the way gender informs community?
3. Discuss Delacour and Bowden's relationship. What does it say about romantic relationships? What does it say about sexual relationships?
4. Despite his maleness, Daniel is groomed for leadership in his community. What does this say about Daniel's character and the Isolist communities compared to the city?
5. Does Daniel act in any way that is strikingly male? How his maleness is expressed, and how does his gender expression compare to other characters?
6. What about the world the novel creates surprises you? What do you think the novel gets right about a world without men? What do you think would be different?

### ABOUT LEONA

Leona Gom is a poet and novelist from northern Alberta. She is the award-winning author of six poetry collections and eight novels. In 1980, she won the Canadian Authors Association Award for *Land of the Peace* and in 1986, she won the Ethel Wilson Fiction Prize for *Housebroken*. Her novel *The Y Chromosome* has been used in women's studies and sociology courses.