

# PERIODICALLY DRAMATIC

THE HISTORICAL MAGAZINE

A LOVE OF HISTORY THROUGH THE ART OF FILM



*Call the Midwife!*  
We're birthing a  
revolution! *page 8*

## WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

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## SOLIDARITY

## STRONGER TOGETHER

Was the goddess  
Athena *really* from  
Greece?

*page 16*



# PERIODICALLY DRAMATIC

## CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

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## Editor's Note

Dear Reader,

Happy Women's History Month! This month's topic is near and dear to my heart. I feel that it summarizes the majority of the period drama community and how we look out for each other. For the most part, I feel that you all have my back. I've made such strong friendships over my months on Instagram and I would do almost anything for them! This month, we honor solidarity among women. It doesn't matter your sexuality, ethnicity, or body parts. We are all women and when we support each other, we can move mountains. I hope this issue makes you feel supported and seen.

Stay safe,



Marina Hill, Editor-in-Chief

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# Account Spotlight

*Every month here at Periodically Dramatic, we will feature an account on Instagram and interview them. Their account will be an ode to period dramas, a historical costumer, or a re-enactor.*

*This month, we have the lovely Angèle (or Angie) from @another.miss.bennet.*



## What is your name and where are you from?

My name is Angèle and I'm 18. I live in France!

## I see you're a student. When do you graduate and what do you want to do?

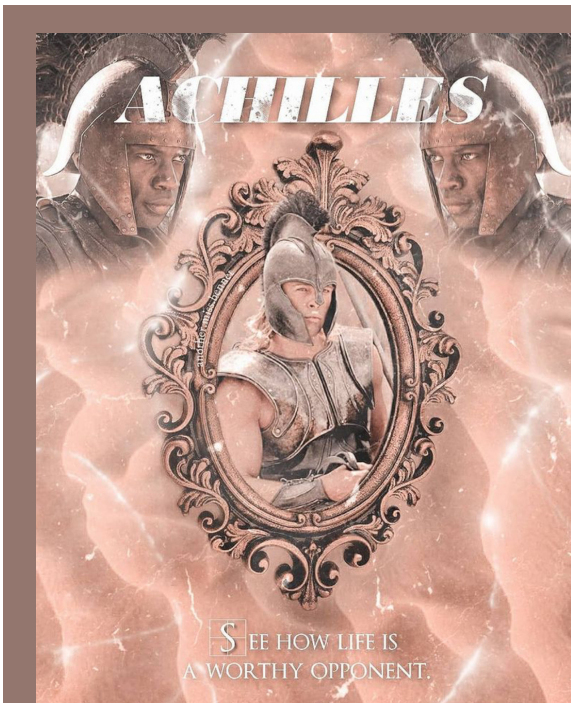
I'm an english philology student (I study the english language + the history and literature of english-speaking countries). I want to be a french teacher in a foreign country and I will have the required diploma in 4 years (I'm a first-year student).

## Why did you create your account?

I created this account last year (January 27). I had this idea for 6 months. I knew what username I was going to use and I was collecting pictures from underrated period dramas and one day I thought: "it's now or never."



*Top left: One of Angèle's edits*  
*Bottom right: One of Angèle's edits*



### What is your favorite time period and why?

My favorite time period is the 19th century. This century is full of great inventions and amazing authors. Feminism is growing, fashion changes every decade, traveling has become easier. However poverty is also growing, people are exploited (in factories, in mines...) so it was not as bright as it seemed.

### What is your favorite period drama and why?

My favorite period drama is *Agora*. It's a movie set in Egypt during ancient times, following the life of Hypatia of Alexandria, a Greek philosopher and mathematician during a period troubled by religious and political conflicts. Her story is really tragic, but was romanticized in the movie. It's an amazing movie, really accurate, with plenty of historical details.

### When did you begin editing photos? How long does it take you?

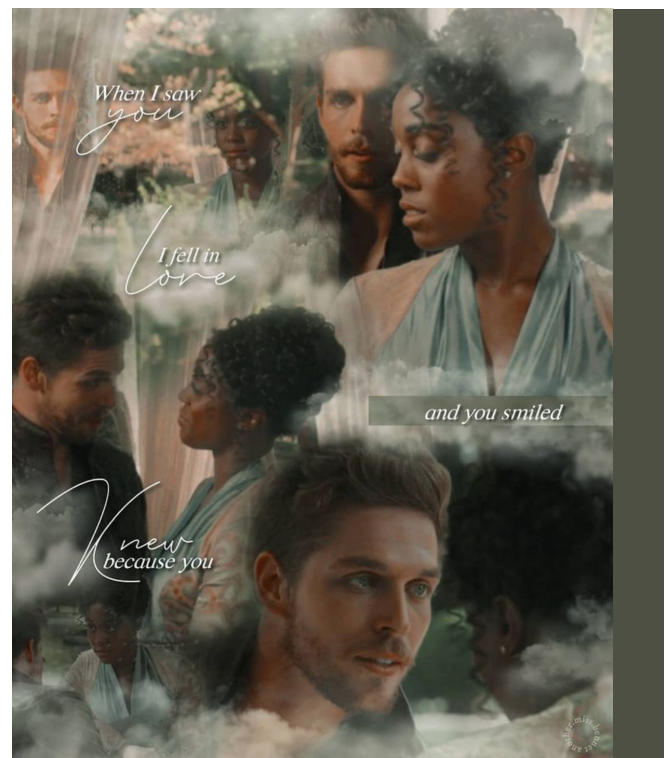
I started editing during the first quarantine, so mid-March. I use Picsart, Polarr, Phonto, and Remini (currently testing other apps...) and it takes me 10-20 or 30-45 minutes, I think. I don't really know. It depends on the edit and my motivation.

### What inspires your edits?

I take my inspiration from songs, the cinematography of a movie/show, an idea/feeling/emotion, a scene that I like, and other editors (they are *so* many talented people out there). ■



*Don't forget to give Angèle a follow on Instagram @another.miss.bennet!*







# THE SONG OF SPANISH SISTERS

By Marina Hill / @periodicallydramatic  
Slight spoilers ahead!

I've been meaning to sit down and watch *The Spanish Princess* ever since I saw Stephanie Levi-John as Lina de Cardonnes. Many often state and explain that Levi-John's character is based on a real person.

I'm going to be frank: I don't necessarily care! I care very little about historical accuracy--whether the show portrayed a certain scenario or character true to history and so on.

However, corsets on bare skin make me cringe. Every. Time. I care much more about visual and aesthetic accuracy than scenario accuracy. Because, as a person of color, life wasn't too great for us!

*Bridgerton*: the hair, corset, and clothing accuracy bother me. The racial accuracy? Not so much!

Even though Lina is based on a true person and racial tensions are realistic, I truly adored seeing it portrayed! The institutions of the "black" and the "white" races didn't really start to cement into the world's societies until the mid-1490s. *The Spanish Princess* showed the transition. "Moor" started to be associated with having African descent rather than being Muslim. Oviedo expressed his concerns to Lina about going back to Spain because converting wasn't good enough. People thought: brown skin = Muslim.

Now.

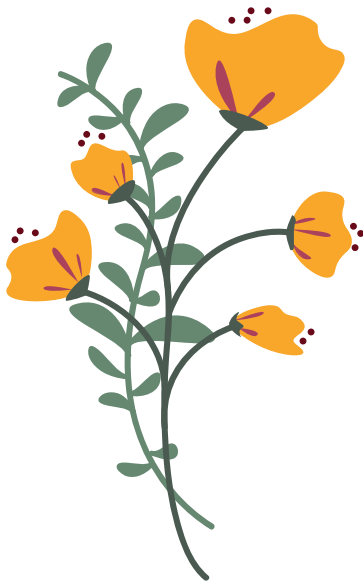
*The sisterhood*. The sisterhood in *The Spanish Princess* had me flapping my hands and holding back tears.



Quarantine has hurt us all. Human connection is down. Our arms are empty of hugs. Our cheeks are missing kisses. It's harder to make friends and build more relationships. Catherine's determination to become the queen of England and marry Harry was because of the pressure. She believed Lina, Rosa, and other ladies of her household depended on her to marry them off to rich Tudor men. She didn't want to let down her friends (or be passed around Europe, as she said in an episode).

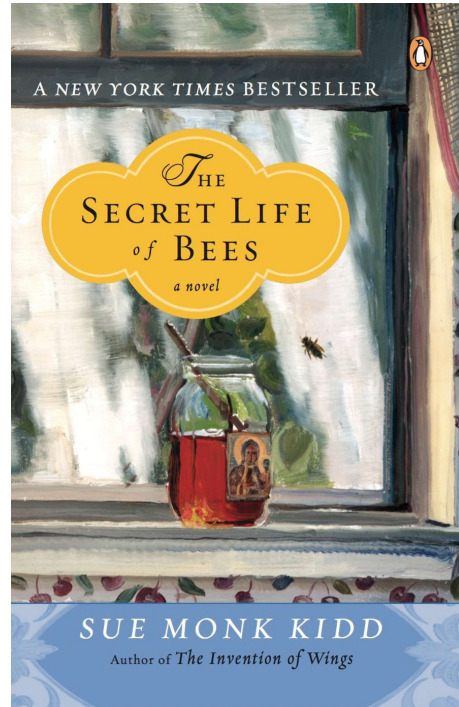
***"They are each other's protectors and no romance plot in this show can compare to their platonic love."***

When it was revealed that Rosa was pregnant and unmarried, Lina risked her own reputation by going into a brothel for a medicine that could terminate Rosa's pregnancy if she wished. When Catherine found out about the pregnancy, she didn't cast Rosa out. Didn't shun her for potentially shaming all of the women around them. Catherine put Rosa in the bathtub and brushed her hair and asked what could be done. Not only is it honorable on Catherine's end, but it poses as the epitome of how these three women care about each other. They are each other's protectors and no romance plot in this show can compare to their platonic love. ■





## BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS



# THE SECRET LIFE OF BEES

This novel set during the 1960s in South Carolina tells the story about "divine female power" and explores racism and sisterhood.

*A personal favorite of the  
Editor-in-Chief*



# CALL THE MIDWIFE

## WOMEN CARRYING WOMEN

BY ELEXIS GRACE / @TIMEPERIODFILM

When I started watching a series about nuns and midwives a few years ago, I had no idea of the impact it would have on me. *Call the Midwife* is set in the 1950s and 1960s in England in a little community called Poplar. The series, based on the memoirs of Jennifer Worth, centers around midwives and nuns alike who help women, typically poor women, deliver their babies. I'll admit, I wasn't quite sure how I'd end up feeling about this show. I thought it would be boring. Boy, am I glad I was wrong! This female-driven show hardly has any male characters!

Instead, the show works on developing its female characters and their relationships with each other, which is honestly quite refreshing. And the male characters that *are* featured, all of whom I adore, only ever support the ladies.

I've become so used to watching shows where, if there is more than one strong woman, then they must surely be pitted against one another. But instead of the usual women-against-women trope, *Call the Midwife* brings in a new trope to period dramas: women carrying women! When one character falls, another comes and carries her until she can get back on her feet. Each woman has her flaws, but rather than using their flaws against each other, they show unconditional love and support for one another. Even the nuns are extremely loving and supportive of the midwives, with whom they seemingly have little in common.

The solidarity between the women is so touching. When it is revealed that one of the midwives is in a relationship with another woman, the other midwives don't shun her or run away (as was common practice back then). Instead, they treat her with just as much love as they did before. When another midwife becomes an alcoholic, her friends offer support rather than judgment. When a midwife suffers from PTSD, she isn't mocked or made to feel like she should just get over her trauma. When a black midwife joins the team, she is treated just how any person should be treated: with respect.





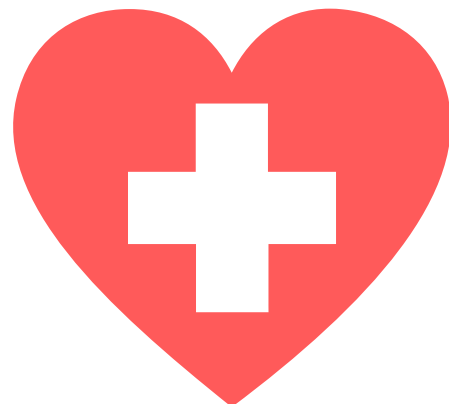


***"I've become so used to watching shows where, if there is more than one strong woman, then they must surely be pitted against one another."***

The love and friendship between this group of women are rare to see on television. Seeing so many different women in one show who all have different likes and dislikes yet love each other anyway is almost unheard of, not just in period dramas, but in any genre of series or movie.

Watching this show is a constant reminder of how we women can change the world if we choose to build each other up rather than making each other feel small because of jealousy, differences of opinions, or whatever else it may be. My final thought on the series is that it does a beautiful job of pulverizing the stereotype that a woman who shows emotion is weak or ridiculous. Instead, it reminds us all of how brave and strong all women are, especially when we stick together!

Too many times have women been silenced. This show has inspired me so much by its portrayal of female friendships, that I felt the need to write this little article about how I will always have your back. No matter who you are, or where you've been, you will always have a voice that matters, and when you feel like nobody will listen, rest assured, I will! ■







# Sylvia Rivera

A GROUNDBREAKING  
ACTIVIST

Sylvia Rivera was a transgender LGBT+ activist of Venezuelan and Puerto Rican descent. She was born in New York City on July 2, 1951. She had lived with her grandmother, who forced her to live on the streets just before her 11th birthday because she began wearing makeup. She was tragically forced to become a child prostitute, but was eventually taken in by the drag queens of her community.

Rivera was close friends with another famous LGBT+ activist, Marsha P. Johnson. She and Johnson founded the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR) to help homeless gay youth, transgender women, and young drag queens. This was a shift in the history of trans activism because a large number of trans youth were homeless and the Human Rights Campaign failed to support them.

***"One of our main goals now is to destroy the Human Rights Campaign, because I'm tired of sitting on the back of the bumper. It's not even the back of the bus anymore—it's the back of the bumper."***  
-Sylvia Rivera

Rivera was often referred to as "the mother of all gays." Although, she detested labels. She admitted that she did not even like the title "transgender." Any label at all did not sit right with her.

When Marsha P. Johnson died, she admitted that a piece of herself had died with her, adding that they had made a pact they would "cross the River Jordan" together.

Rivera unfortunately suffered from alcoholism, which ended her life at 50 years old. She led a turbulent life, but her work has left ripples in the world. ■





## MARY E. PLEASANT

It is unclear where Mary Ellen Pleasant was born. It is speculated to be in Georgia or Louisiana, but she stated she was born in Philadelphia in 1814. The origin of her father is unknown—he could have been Asian, Native American, or European American. After becoming the widow of John W. Smith, a Cuban planter, she moved to California with her daughter, Elizabeth, and married John Pleasant. She became a socialite in the African American community in San Francisco and was an exceptionally smart businesswoman.

She co-founded a committee that helped fugitive slaves, donated \$30,000 to John Brown's slave rebellion, and operated a restaurant and a boarding house. However, some speculated that the boarding house was a brothel. Some believed her to be the "voodoo" queen because of her power over people, especially men. She was often called "Mammy," a nickname she was quick to aggressively shut down. Mary was referred to as a highly mysterious woman. She asked that her gravestone be inscribed with: "She was a friend of John Brown." ■

# Hollywood Has Nothing on Sisterhood



When *Hollywood* first released on Netflix last year, it was welcomed with mixed reviews. Some people didn't like the unrealistic portrayal of 1940s Hollywood, whereas some loved it and thought it was a perfect example of representation being more important than realism. That is part of the reason I am such a fan; its representation of different races and the LGBT community, admittedly mostly men. However, we still see several gay or bisexual characters as opposed to the single cliché gay side character we're accustomed to seeing.

One thing the screenwriters deserve recognition for is the strong but emotional, well-written female characters. Avis, Claire, Camille, and Ellen are among the women who are given individual storylines where we see them have their chance to be strong and rise above everyone else's expectations. I, however, will be focusing primarily on Claire and Camille, covering the theme of female solidarity, and how, despite their differences, they are able to support one another.

Just for the people reading this who have never seen the show, I will also give a brief description of the show (*potential spoilers ahead*:). As is suggested by the title, the show takes place in Hollywood, following the journey of four aspiring actors, a screenwriter and a director trying to make it in the business, some at more at an advantage than others. The show is set in the late 1940s, meaning the black or gay characters were automatically at a disadvantage and inarguably had to work harder than the white straight characters. Avis, who is temporarily running Ace Studios, decides to green-light a movie called *Meg*. The show follows the production of this film.



*By Gabriella Spooner*  
*@perioddramasqueen*



Back to Claire and Camille! It is worth mentioning that, while they have a few differences, the most significant one to the plot is that Claire is white and Camille is black. Because the show is set within the entertainment industry it would have been easy to write these women as rivals, but instead, we see them grow throughout the series and end up supporting each other despite the initial, admittedly one-sided, rivalry. However, when we are initially introduced to them in episode 2, it is clear that they aren't friends. They are both contracted actresses at Ace Studios, but neither of them has been in a film yet. They are both in the studios cafe, and while there is no proper interaction, Claire throws Camille spiteful glances and Camille labels Claire as "her competition."



***"It would have been easy to write these women as rivals, but instead, we see them grow throughout the series and end up supporting each other."***

Rather than using this to her advantage, Claire offers help and goes even further by purposely messing up her screen test with the hopes that everyone will realize Camille is the better actress. This episode plays such an important part in the theme of female solidarity because for the first time, we see that Claire isn't a bad person and doesn't hate Camille. More than anything, she wanted to prove to her mother that she could act. *(cont.)*

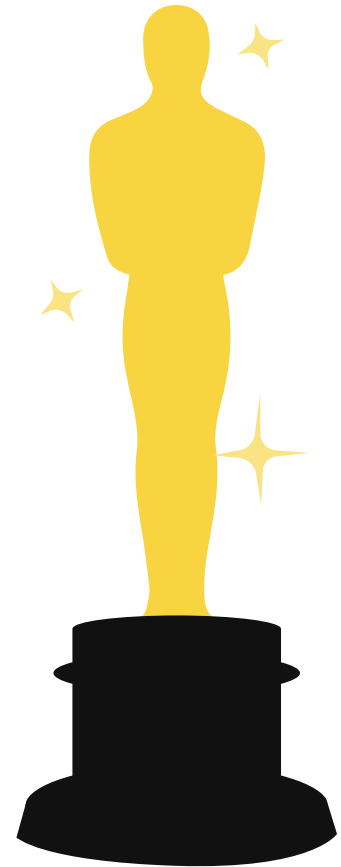
Later, within the same episode, they are in acting class together. We start to realize that Claire doesn't like Camille, not because of her race, but rather because the latter of the two is a better actress. A woman then comes into the class saying that Camille is wanted and will be having her first movie role, so she goes only to find out that she is having to play a maid. Claire, however, is unaware of the role and is just jealous that she still hasn't been able to make her film debut.

In episode 3, everything starts looking up for the two aspiring actresses! They both get screen tests for *Peg*, or what goes on to become *Meg*. In episode 4, we finally get to see their screen tests. As well as, this we also see them supporting one another for the first time. They are, understandably, both nervous, as this is the first time either of them has done something like this. Because they both share concerns, it means they can confide in each other: Camille admits that she can't cry on command.

In the following episode we find out that Camille got the role of the title character, now known as Meg. Claire shockingly admits to her mother that Camille was the right choice. Later in the episode, the cast is at the first read-through for *Meg*. Throughout this scene, Claire looks at Camille with genuine admiration. After they've finished, both of them tell the each other that they were fantastic. It is from this episode onwards that we start to see them as actual friends and they continue supporting each other through to the final episode.

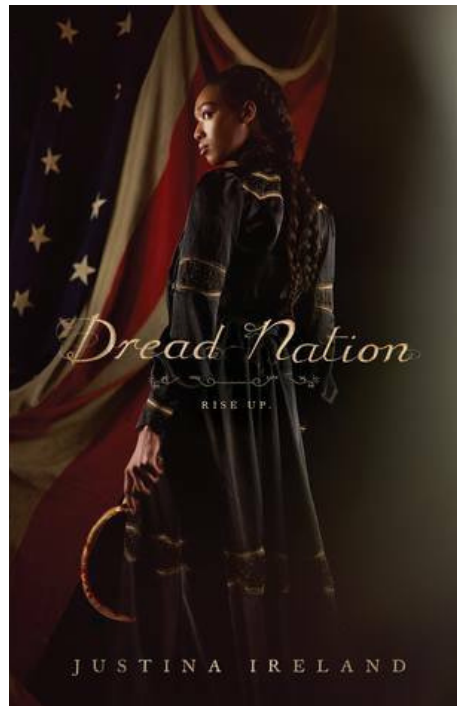
In the series finale, the cast goes to the Oscars together. However, the hotel that the ceremony is being held at has a "no blacks" policy, but since Camille was nominated for Best Actress, she states she has the right to enter and sit in the audience. Claire is quick to stand up for her, but Camille wants to fight her own battle.

Overall, this show may not be the most historically accurate but it has helped so many people feel seen. I could easily write a piece like this on every individual character, and why they are so amazing. It also shows us how powerful film and TV can be, whether you're the person watching it, starring in it, or working behind the scenes. It also does so well at showing women and girls that they can be strong, but that doesn't mean they can't be emotional. It lets women and girls realize that you could be completely different from other women but that doesn't mean you have to be rivals, but you can instead support each other no matter what. I hope anyone who is female reading this can, at the very least, take away the importance of supporting and helping others and that we don't need to compare ourselves to other women, but can work with them to help create change. ■





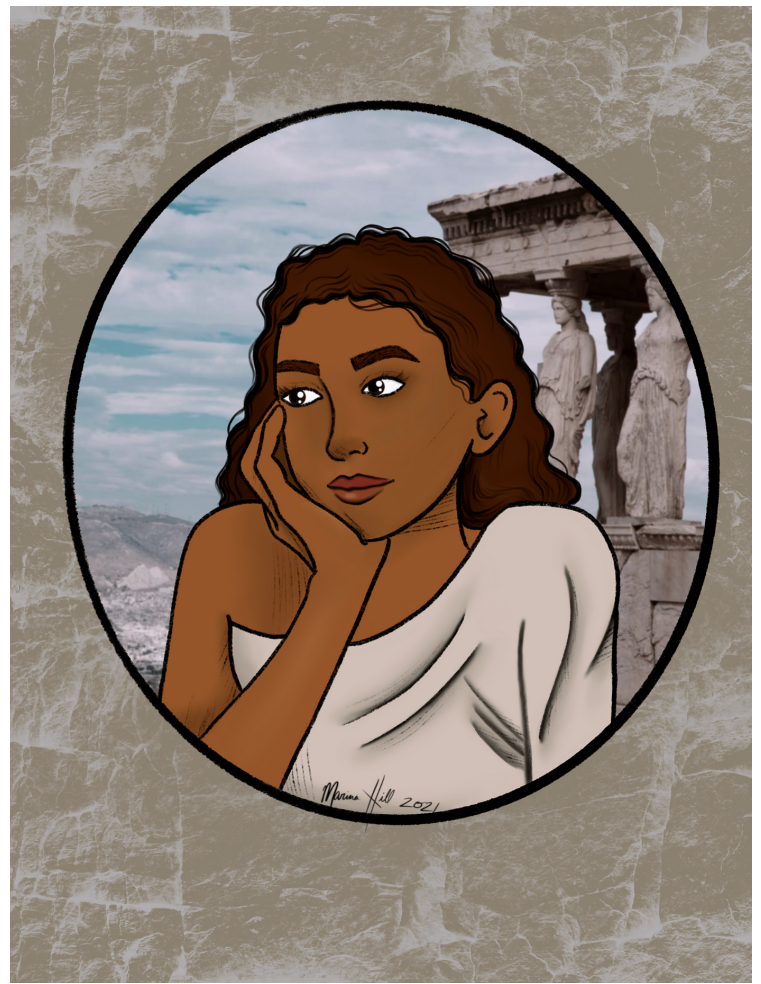
## BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS



# DREAD NATION

This novel is intended for young adults and fans of horror fiction. It takes place in the mid 1800s and follows Jane McKeene as she fights to survive in a country plagued with zombies.

*The Editor-in-Chief rating:  
5 stars*



## BLACK ATHENA

There are scholar theories about Athena, the Greek goddess of war, actually being a black woman! There are dozens of mixed reactions to this, but it should be noted that the majority of the classicist field is vehemently racist. I should also like to note that Athena is neither black nor white because race simply didn't *exist* in antiquity. However, if we discuss whether her background includes African, then we can approach differently. In antiquity, the only methods of oppression were culture and religion. If Athena had African blood, then it wouldn't have been a cause for discussion because prejudice wasn't based on skin tone. If she had Egyptian blood, it likely wouldn't have bothered the Greek because many aspects of Greek culture were inspired by the Egyptians. Mary R. Lefkowitz, a classicist who wrote entire books trying to debunk Afrocentric history and a black Athena, unknowingly proved my point with one of her essays. Greeks often visited Egypt, a fact she stated, which means it is completely viable that Athena could have been part Egyptian. It should be known that Lefkowitz also wrote "Myths are resolutely anachronistic," which is true. The Greek goddess Athena is mythological. If she is argued to have some Egyptian blood, which would have been completely possible—*if she were real*—then there is no problem with people treating her as such.

All of this being said, it would likely be easier if Egyptian mythology was simply given the same attention as Greek mythology. ■





We formally introduce to you...

# *Isabelle!*

Those who follow @periodicallydramatic on Instagram helped our Editor-in-Chief build a character to illustrate! They voted on height, skin tone, hair color, dress color, everything! Isabelle is the start of many. If you want to help decide on the next character, follow @periodicallydramatic!





# HOW YOU CAN WRITE FOR US

## **For reviews of period dramas:**

Follow @periodicallydramatic on Instagram. The topic of the following month's issue is announced the fourth of every month.

OR

Locate the "contact" page on our website and send us a message about the month's topics.

## **For short stories:**

Locate the Google application form on our website's "contact" page. Submissions are on a rolling basis. We accept: any genre of fiction as long as the setting is historical.

## **For personal narratives:**

Locate the Google application form on our website's "contact" page. Submissions are on a rolling basis. We accept narratives that highlight the impacts a historical figure, event, or drama has had on you.