

**Ab Fab Professors Reading Group – Fiction Uncovered Review**  
**The Colour of Milk (Nell Leyshon)**

“i am not very tall and my hair is the colour of milk. my name is mary and i have learned to spell it m.a.r.y.”

An interesting short book which stays with you long after you've finished. The Colour of Milk follows Mary, a simple young farm girl, through a year where she is sent by her family to care for the local vicar's wife. Her desire and determination to read is at the core of the story and to emphasis that this book is written in the style of an adult learning to read. The book club had mixed views of whether this worked, some found the lack of punctuation irritating but others felt it gave a strength and voice to the book. It's Mary's voice, which carries the story and sets the urgent pace. Set in 1831, the book delivers a strong message about the lack of choice for women and how this could lead them to desperate measures; a message still relevant for women in many countries in the world. There is bleakness to the book, which contrasts with the very cheerful, headstrong Mary – making the reader feel as if they know it'll end in tears long before she does. The book club had mixed views on the book overall but all agreed the last section of the book was the strongest. Although the lack of options for women at this time has been covered in many books, The Colour of Milk uses the voice of Mary to retell the story in an original and hard-hitting style. A great book club read as it's likely to split opinion on the style and literary techniques used rather than the story.