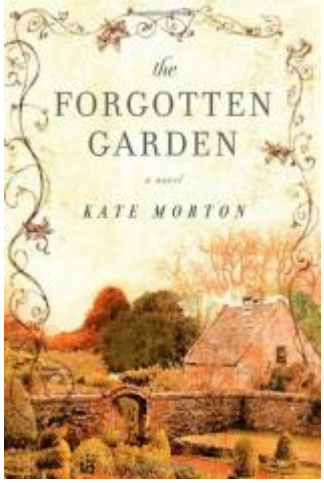
The Forgotten Garden

by Kate Morton



About the Book

From the internationally bestselling author of *The House at Riverton*, an unforgettable new novel that transports the reader from the back alleys of poverty of pre-World War I London to the shores of colonial Australia where so many made a fresh start, and back to the windswept coast of Cornwall, England, past and present.

A tiny girl is abandoned on a ship headed for Australia in 1913. She arrives completely alone with nothing but a small suitcase containing a few clothes and a single book --- a beautiful volume of fairy tales. She is taken in by the dockmaster and his wife and raised as their own. On her twenty-first birthday they tell her the truth, and with her sense of self shattered and with very little to go on, "Nell" sets out on a journey to England to try to trace her story, to fi nd her real identity. Her quest leads her to Blackhurst Manor on the Cornish coast and the secrets of the doomed Mountrachet family. But it is not until her granddaughter, Cassandra, takes up the search after Nell's death that all the pieces of the puzzle are assembled. At Cliff Cottage, on the grounds of Blackhurst Manor, Cassandra discovers the forgotten garden of the book's title and is able to unlock the secrets of the beautiful book of fairy tales.

This is a novel of outer and inner journeys and an homage to the power of storytelling. **The Forgotten Garden** is filled with unforgettable characters who weave their way through its spellbinding plot to astounding effect.

Morton's novels are #1 bestsellers in England and Australia and are published in more than twenty languages. Her first novel, **The House at Riverton**, was a *New York Times* bestseller.<

Discussion Guide

1. On the night of her twenty-first birthday, Nell's father, Hugh, tells her a secret that shatters her sense of self. How important is a strong sense of identity to a person's life? Was Hugh right to tell her about her past? How might Nell's life have turned out differently had she not discovered the truth?

2. Did Hugh and Lil make the right decision when they kept Nell?

3. How might Nell's choice of occupation have been related to her fractured identity?

4. Is it possible to escape the past, or does one's history always find a way to revisit the present?

5. Eliza, Nell and Cassandra all lose their birth mothers when they are still children. How are their lives affected differently by this loss? How might their lives have evolved had they not had this experience?

6. Nell believes that she comes from a tradition of 'bad mothers'. Does this belief become a self-fulfilling prophesy? How does Nell's relationship with her granddaughter, Cassandra, allow her to revisit this perception of herself as a 'bad mother'?

7. Is **The Forgotten Garden** a love story? If so, in what way/s?

8. Tragedy has been described as “the conflict between desire and possibility.” Following this definition, is **The Forgotten Garden** a tragedy? If so, in what way/s?

9. A 'plait' motif threads through **The Forgotten Garden**. What significance might plaits have for the story?

10. In what ways do Eliza's fairy tales underline and develop other themes within the novel?

11. In what ways do the settings in **The Forgotten Garden** represent or reflect the characters' experiences?

Author Bio

Kate Morton, a native Australian, holds degrees in dramatic art and English literature. She lives with her family in Brisbane, Australia.

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