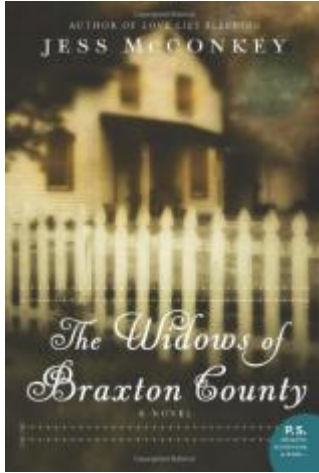


## The Widows of Braxton County

by Jess McConkey

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### About the Book

WIDOWS OF BRAXTON COUNTY by Jess McConkey is a haunting and suspenseful novel about family secrets and how well we really know the people we love.

Kate is looking forward to starting a new life with her new husband, Joseph Krause. She leaves the big city and moves with him to the Iowa farm that has been in his family for more than 140 years.

Instead of something out of COUNTRY LIVING, Kate finds life on the farm a struggle. She hears gossip from the unfriendly neighbors about the connection between the Krause family and a mysterious death decades before.

As the past creeps into Kate's present, she's caught in a web of dangerous, unexplainable events.

Jess McConkey, who is also published under the pseudonym Shirley Damsgaard, is an award-winning writer of short fiction.

### Discussion Guide

1. THE WIDOWS OF BRAXTON COUNTY focuses on two central characters. In what ways do you think Kate's life runs parallel to Hannah's? How do their lives differ?
2. What is your first impression of Kate? Does it change by the end of the book? What impact do Doris and Rose have on your perception of Kate?
3. What is your impression of Hannah? Was there anything she could have done to change her life? Do you think that she ever loved her husband?
4. Do you believe the Krause family was cursed? If so, where did the curse originate? Discuss the difference between a curse and a haunting. Was the Krause home haunted, and if so, by whom? How much do you think that Trudy knew about her family's history?
5. Did Trudy deliberately place the knife instrumental in Joe's death in Kate's vehicle? Did she want Kate blamed for his death?
6. Joe is incredibly attached to his mother. Was Joe's attachment to Trudy justified? How do such strong attachments form?

7. In the beginning, Kate struggles to be the “perfect wife.” Why do you think it was so important to her to please both Joe and Trudy?
8. How does Kate’s relationship with her grandmother shape the other relationships in her life?
9. How does the quote “The Sins of the Father” resonate throughout the story?
10. Does Hannah’s stepson Joseph have any redeeming qualities? How was his personality shaped by growing up in an abusive household? Was there justice for the crimes that Joseph committed?
11. One act of violence, the murder of Jacob, has shaped many lives throughout the generations. How did it affect Hannah? Willie? Joseph? Essie? Rose?
12. In the end, did Hannah triumph over her adversaries? If she did, is it important for the townspeople to know?

#### Author Bio

#### Critical Praise

"Haunting, mysterious, and subtly romantic, this debut under Shirley Damsgaard's psuedonym is inspirational and full of hope."

— RTBookreviews.com

"A riveting ride that will start your blood racing from the first line and keep you guessing until the last."

— Kris Neri, author of REVENGE FOR OLD TIME'S SAKE

"Part mystery, part ghost story, Love Lies Bleeding takes readers on a spin-tingling trip into a disturbed mind and the lives of two women who must face their greatest fears --- or die trying."

— Casey Daniels, author of A HARD DAY'S FRIGHT

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