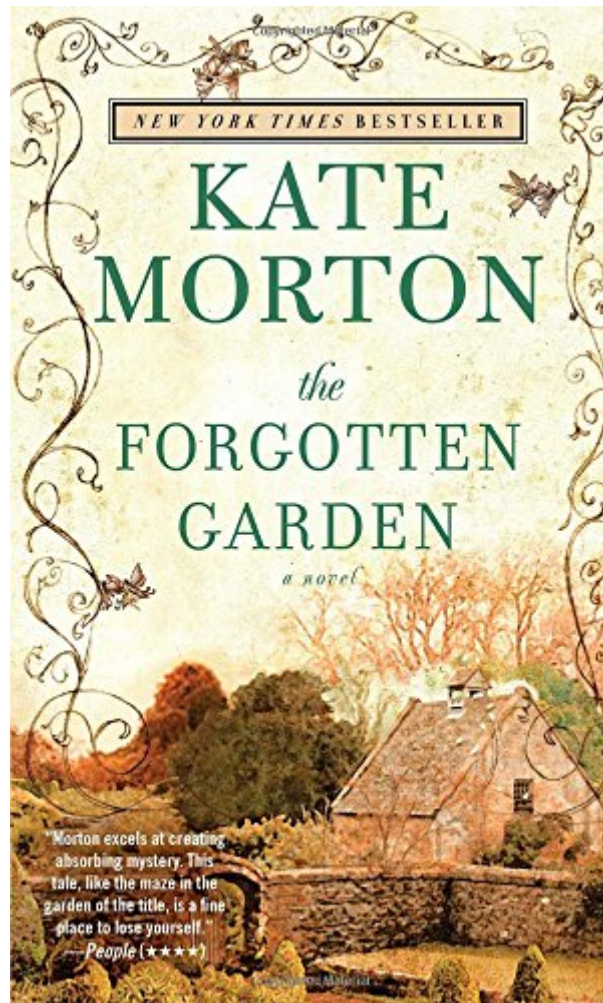
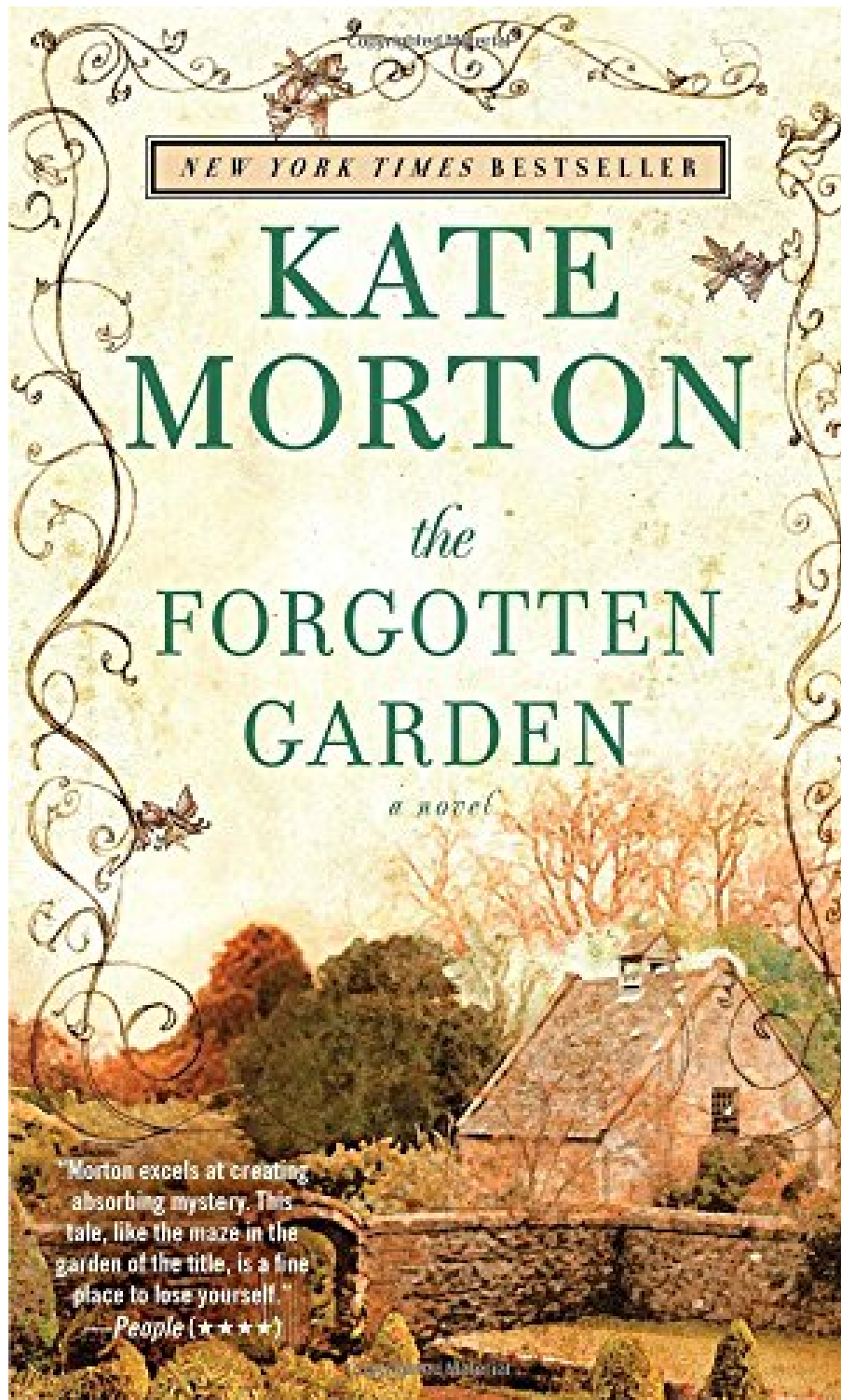


THE FORGOTTEN GARDEN: A NOVEL BY KATE MORTON



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From the #1 internationally bestselling author of *The House at Riverton*, a novel that takes the reader on an unforgettable journey through generations and across continents as two women try to uncover their family's secret past

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 very little to go on, "Nell" sets out to trace 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. A spellbinding tale of mystery and self-discovery, *The Forgotten Garden* will take hold of your imagination and never let go.

- Sales Rank: #8331 in Books
- Brand: SIMON & SCHUSTER
- Published on: 2010-02-16
- Released on: 2010-02-16
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.25" h x 1.60" w x 5.31" l, 1.00 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 560 pages

Features

- Great product!

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Most helpful customer reviews

759 of 784 people found the following review helpful.

The Forgotten Garden: Another Blockbuster for Kate Morton

By Phyllis Staff

A four-year-old girl waits alone on a dock in Australia for parents who never come. Her only possession? A tiny white suitcase containing no information about who she is or how she came to be abandoned.

Nell is a foundling, and what a rare foundling she is. A stow-away on an ocean liner, she refuses to tell even so much as her name. Until in her 60s, over-protected by a loving foster father, she has no clue how she came to be alone on that dock. Hers is the mystery that unfolds in this long novel spanning more than a century, five generations, and two distant continents.

Enthusiastic fans of Kate Morton's first novel, "The House at Riverton," will thrill to her second, "The Forgotten Garden." Like her first, this is a novel whose female characters are finely and fully drawn, and whose males are wispy and insubstantial. How its women interact, how they love and hate one another, how their interplay moves through tragedy and redemption will provide hours of pleasure for her fans.

Morton's excellent pacing creates a page-turner that is hard to put down, although its length might give pause to those who suffer from carpal tunnel syndrome. Morton tells her story not only through the actions of her characters but also through fairy tales that work on several levels and provide clues to the mystery's final solution. Many readers will have guessed the solution long before the end of the book. Nevertheless, Morton maintains reader interest throughout.

Overall, this is a highly satisfying read. It's fun to watch the author weave the lives of women into a rich tapestry of life and love, anger and betrayal. However, the novel is not without its weaknesses. First, as mentioned above, Morton's male characters are weak and insipid and never come to life. Second, the love interest at the end of the book does not mesh with the rest of the work. It is almost as though an editor said, "You'd better add a little love story here," so Morton did.

The book's flaws, while mildly unsettling, are not serious enough to spoil a great read. If you enjoy long stories about generations of women, you will love "The Forgotten Garden."

361 of 378 people found the following review helpful.

A fairy tale gone wrong

By Baking Enthusiast

I was a bit hesitant in picking up "The Forgotten Garden" by Kate Morton. After my disappointment with "The House at Riverton," I wasn't sure if I was willing to invest more time. Pleased to say that the story hooked me from the get-go, and though the book is longer than I thought necessary, it was altogether an entertaining read.

At the heart of this big, fat tale (645 pages) is a mystery. In 1913, a dock master, Hugh, discovers a four-year-old girl who's been left alone on a wharf in Queensland, Australia after all passengers had disembarked from a boat that sailed from England. Taking pity on her, Hugh takes her home to his wife, Lil. In spite of Hugh's and Lil's efforts to find the girl's family, time passes and no one claims the tyke. Having hit her head while onboard the boat, the little girl couldn't even remember her own name and all she could recall was a woman she calls the Authoress who was supposed to sail with her. Hugh and Lil decide to keep her as their own and name her Nell.

In the present day, Nell's granddaughter, Cassandra, is grieving Nell's passing. As she goes through Nell's notebooks, she realizes that her grandmother had never stopped searching for her true parents. Cassie takes over the search, which leads her to England and to a small Cornish village, and finally, to a decrepit cottage and its walled garden...a garden that swallowed the secrets of the 1900s and buried within its grounds the fascinating and tragic story of the Mountrachets and the woman a child had called the Authoress.

A challenge to the reader will be the constant switching of perspective from past to present and in between, primarily the years of 1913, 1975 and 2005. It's a bit off-putting in the first few chapters but after awhile, it's

no longer an encumbrance. Though the main story is Nell's parentage, the novel is dense with stories of the characters whose lives intersect and create the environment upon which Nell's birth and subsequent abandonment hinges. There are also many incidental details that don't necessarily impact the story but are included nevertheless to bring alive the era being depicted and add realism to the backstories. Included, too, are fairy tales by the Authoress that serve as allegories of the truths secreted by the doomed Mountrachet family, a family that "wanted things they shouldn't or couldn't have" and destroyed lives with their avarice, entitlements and perversions.

It can be a grueling read at close to 700 pages but the mystery itself kept me reading and speculating. Clues are parceled out in small doses and it takes a very long time, almost the end, before one can put together a clear picture of Nell's history. That's a good decision on the author's part as otherwise, a reader's interest would likely wane quickly. As Cassie puts it, "the closer we get, the more tangled the web becomes."

The characters are, for the most part, very interesting, though a bit on the melodramatic side, but it's the kind of melodrama that befits the Victorian era and the early 1900s. Of particular note is the emerging technology of x-ray in the mid-1890s, the careless use of which put into motion a series of tragic events that would reverberate for over 100 years.

It's an enthralling read and, with patience from a reader, delivers very satisfactory answers. Stories about foundlings, secrets and Victorian women have been done hundreds of times in various iterations and can get tiresome fast if the core story is weak. Glad to say that no such error is committed in "The Forgotten Garden." The first few chapters pulled me in very quickly and I found myself compulsively on the same quest for the truth. The mystery has sturdy legs that don't weaken for the novel's entire duration.

117 of 126 people found the following review helpful.

A favorite!

By Ellis Bell

The Forgotten Garden, the follow-up to *The House at Riverton: A Novel* (but by no means a sequel), is a multi-layered novel with complicated characters and a highly intriguing storyline. The story jumps back and forth in time, but rarely is the reader confused as to what's going on. I loved *The House at Riverton*, so as soon as I finished it, I went right over and bought *The Forgotten Garden* from Amazon UK. Let me just say that I wasn't disappointed.

The book opens in 1913, when a young girl with no name is found on a quayside in Australia. She doesn't remember anything about herself, and all she carries with her is a white suitcase containing, among other personal items, a book of fairytales penned by a woman the girl calls the Authoress.

In 1975, the girl, now a woman called Nell, goes back to England, where she attempts to find answers to questions about her identity. Her travels lead her to Blackhurst Manor, delving deep into the Mountrachet family's secrets and purchasing a cottage on the Blackhurst property. But before she can solve the mystery of her past, Nell's flaky daughter Lesley shows up, dumping her granddaughter Cassandra on her doorstep--permanently.

In 2005, after Nell's death, Cassandra inherits the cottage and tries to answer the questions her grandmother raised. The stories of these two women are complemented by that of Eliza Makepeace, who grew up in the slums of London around the turn of the nineteenth century, and her cousin, the genteel Rose Mountrachet.

This is clearly a novel written by a woman, for women, about women; the male characters take a backseat to the female ones, sometimes becoming unlikeable. In fact, Linus Mountrachet is downright creepy, and

Nathaniel West is a bit of a cad. The novel is punctuated here and there with some of Eliza's short stories, which provide wonderful little interludes, kind of like AS Byatt's *Possession*, in a way. *Possession*, mixed with a little bit of *The Secret Garden*. We're even introduced to Frances Hodgson Burnett, suggesting that she might have received inspiration for *The Secret Garden* from Eliza and Rose's garden.

What I loved about this atmospheric, fairytale-like novel was that Morton tells the story of these different, but connected, women, but she doesn't give everything up right away. I tried to guess at the mystery many times, but ultimately my guesses were never correct. The characters are well developed, and although it takes a little while to get into the story, this is an excellent novel, filled with old houses and hidden gardens with secrets and surprises. It's also a novel about foreshadowing; even Cassandra's name suggests someone who can foretell the future. Aside from some too-fortuitous chances (for example, Eliza is rescued from poverty at the exact moment that she's about to be sent off to the workhouse), I found it really, really difficult to put this novel down, and only finished it reluctantly.

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