



The House at Riverton

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The House at Riverton is a gorgeous debut novel set in England between the wars. Perfect for fans of "Downton Abbey," it's the story of an aristocratic family, a house, a mysterious death, and a way of life that vanished forever, told in flashback by a woman who witnessed it all.

The novel is full of secrets - some revealed, others hidden forever, reminiscent of the romantic suspense of Daphne du Maurier. It's also a meditation on memory and the devastation of war and a beautifully rendered window into a fascinating time in history.

The House at Riverton Details

Date : Published June 15th 2007 by Pan (first published 2006)

ISBN : 9780330448444

Author : Kate Morton

Format : Paperback 599 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Fiction, Mystery, Romance

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From Reader Review *The House at Riverton* for online ebook

Alissa Patrick says

A great historical fiction piece about a rich high society family with a deep dark secret hidden for decades. This one was a real page turner and the ending was worth the build-up of what The Secret was.

Mlpmom (Book Reviewer) says

This was so unbelievably sad in so many ways but so good too. Riddled with darkness and lightness and secrets. I absolutely loved the mysteries as they all slowly unfolded and everyone's lives, their passions, their secrets, were revealed.

Caos says

Vale, está claro que voy a tardar mucho en superar éste libro, creo que asta me va a dejar trauma. La historia es narrada de una forma muy bonita, te lo explica todo sin necesidad de narrarte las partes poco interesantes, me encanta la forma en que en cuatro capítulos pueden haber pasado dos años, los sutiles spoilers que para nada impiden qué el libro te sorprenda, hay tantos personajes pero todos tan definidos, se conecta mucho con algunos protagonistas y de verdad qué soy otra persona después de leer éste libro. Pero el final (no haré spoilers), el final es bestial. Tan impredecible, tan desgarrador, me a marcado para siempre. Es el final que más (o casi) me a marcado de todos los libros qué he leído. Me destrozada saber qué lo he terminado. Su final a revolucionado mi interior, roza lo perturbador. Asta me duele. En fin, quizás estoy exagerando porqué la lectura es muy reciente, pero de momento, es lo qué pienso. Muy recomendado, aunque se tiene que tener un poco de paciencia con el porqué es el tipo de libro que a veces te da la sensación que no arranca.

Elizabeth says

I probably would have enjoyed Kate Morton's debut novel *The House at Riverton* more if I had not already experienced the greater expression of her writing talent in *The Forgotten Garden*. *Riverton* shares many of the themes of her later work, but with the narrator at a greater remove from the focus of the story, it tends to make her characterizations a bit flat. The story of the Hartford family, focused on the sisters Hannah and Emmeline is told by Grace, a servant to the family for many years. Her unequal social relationship to the sisters keeps her at a distance and their experiences are relayed through her limited perspective.

While I appreciate the detail taken to illuminate the differences in the lives of the social classes, it seemed to take the novel a long time to build up tension around the incident at the heart of the book's mystery. The last quarter of the book moved along well, but by that time many of the hints throughout the book had answered most of the questions, just the details remained to be filled in. The use of foreshadowing became a bit repetitive, giving the book the feel of a serial at times.

When I reached the end of the book, I couldn't help wondering what it would be like if Morton had used the

ending as a jumping off point for a story about Grace's later life. The book tantalizes us with interesting details about choices she made as a woman that seemed much more interesting to me. How did she transform from a Victorian lady's maid into an independent career-minded woman, exploring the world as an archeologist? What happened in her relationship with her daughter Ruth over the years? How did she and Alfred find each other after over half a lifetime and how had their relationship changed? Unfortunately we didn't get to experience Grace's character growth within the story itself.

?Susan? says

This was a good historical read, it has a double story going on for the main character. I liked the good ending.

Un té con Ceres says

¡Me ha encantado!, es de esos libros que te dejan un buen sabor de boca y que ha merecido la pena leer. No cuesta leerlo pero sí engancharse. Al principio trata de contar como empezó todo para entender la historia y eso quizás sea más lento, pero enseguida te enganchas a la trama y ahí ya no puedes parar.

Candi says

"Whooshing like a wind through a tunnel, an angry wind that drags behind it a summer storm, rushing towards me, faster and faster. It is my past, and it is coming for me. It is everywhere; in my ears, behind my eyes, pushing my ribs..."

Grace is 98 years old and living in a nursing facility when a visit from a young film producer compels her to relive her past; a past that is full of secrets that she has kept to herself for the last seventy years. Her story begins pre-World War I in England, when at the age of fourteen Grace secures a position as housemaid at Riverton House. It was a time of prosperity and vitality for the inhabitants of Riverton, and Grace relishes her new position. She quickly becomes fascinated by Hannah and Emmeline, granddaughters to her employer Lady Violet and daughters to Master Frederick Hartford. When she discovers 'The Game' the sisters share with their brother David, Grace learns that secrets are a pleasurable diversion for the trio. *"For The Game was more than its name suggested. It was a complex fantasy, an alternate world into which they escaped. There were no costumes, no swords, no feathered headdresses. Nothing that would have marked it as a game. For that was its nature. It was secret."* But at what point do secrets go too far?

As expected, with the onset of World War I life as the Riverton household understands it will inescapably alter. Two young girls grow into womanhood and the desire for independence will affect both Hannah and Emmeline in different yet significant ways. Grace will pine for a young man sent to war and will continue in her dedication to the family and to Hannah in particular, with whom she feels a special affinity. Choices will be made, a tragic young poet will enter the scene, and more secrets will be cultivated. As the reader learns the story as told by the elderly Grace in a series of flashbacks, secrets are slowly revealed and some are still

kept close. The tension mounts throughout, but not at a mad pace. You can sense a build-up to a shocking conclusion, only parts of which have been disclosed from the start. An astonishing twist made the gradual unraveling only that much more gratifying by book's end.

I found this to be very entertaining, with a satisfying gothic-like feel to the story. The distinction in the social classes during the first half of twentieth century England, as well as the roles and interactions of the servants in an aristocratic home were interesting elements and, I thought, authentically portrayed. The characters were well-drawn, despite the fact I didn't develop any special connection to any of them. I also enjoyed contemplating the effect that the passage of time plays on a person's memory. *"True history, the past... It isn't flat or linear. It has no outline. It is slippery, like liquid; infinite and unknowable, like space. And it is changeable: just when you think you see a pattern, perspective shifts, an alternative version is proffered, a long-forgotten memory resurfaces."*

I liked this more than my first Kate Morton novel, **The Forgotten Garden**, and now feel compelled to read more of her work in the future. Recommended for those who enjoy historical fiction and a slower-paced but suspenseful plot.

"It is a universal truth that no matter how well one knows a scene, to observe it from above is something of a revelation."

Hope says

An enjoyable story and a beautiful historical setting marred by clumsy story telling, overbearing foreshadowing, and an emotional disconnect with characters.

Bridget Vollmer says

Seriously this story killed me. Kate Morton writes such beautifully tragic stories. They move at a slower pace but ending is so worth it. I'm just going to take a moment to shed some tears and process this story.

Love listening to this on audio, I feel like I should be drinking some tea and eating cookies.
Cheers mate!

Beatriz says

Libro con muy buena narrativa pero que entretiene lo justo. Es la suma de pasajes de la vida de la protagonista en su juventud, que a través de recuerdos que van siendo gatillados por distintas situaciones, van dando forma a la trama de la novela.

El libro no está mal, pero hay aspectos que no me gustaron mucho, como el hecho de que el principal suceso de la novela, anunciado incluso en su contraportada, apenas ocupa las últimas páginas del libro, y uno llega a él un poco cansado de tantos recuerdos un poco inconexos de nuestra octogenaria narradora. El desenlace se lee casi igual que las 450 páginas anteriores; reconozco que es bueno, pero tampoco impactante.

También cansa tanta similitud con otras novelas de la autora, es una fórmula que creo se le va a terminar desgastando.

De todas maneras es recomendable, se lee bien y las descripciones de la época pre y post guerra son bastante buenas.

Anne says

This was such a delight to read! I absolutely loved every single second I spent in this universe, and I could have gone on reading forever...

The book includes many characters. I tend to get confused by that, but thankfully all of them were well developed in this case. They had different personalities and character traits, so I was able to easily tell them apart and picture them in my head.

The Relationships between each of them were all kept on a realistic level. None of them were too close or too distant. Especially the amount of contact/closeness between the house residents and the working staff at Riverton Manor seemed believable to me and never over the top.

The writing style was very nice and "comfortable" to read. It was perfect for the time period the story plays in, and I felt like I was a part of this world.

The transitions between the past and the present were done very well and it all fit together (better than I would have expected).

I also liked how some script pages, letters, E-Mails and articles were added into the story. This helped to explain some of the background stories in an easy way. I can't stand it when characters have conversations in which they provide huge amounts of information to each other (including every single little detail)! It's always so awkward and unnatural. By providing these little extra snippets, the author prevented those stiff interactions in a simple, but smart way.

I found the romances that took place believable as well, and also rather "tender". I can't explain exactly what I mean by that; I was just touched by it in some way. It made me feel things - which does mean a lot, since I'm normally not too overly excited about the romance aspects in a book.

These developing relationships had an appropriate speed (especially for the time period) and was kept at a convincing level.

There are also two portrayals of the aftereffects of the First World War. Those weren't done unnecessarily dramatic or over the top, either. They were kept at bay (to a believable point), and I really liked and appreciated that.

The only little thing I have to complain about is the lack of mention of the characters ages. I sometimes wasn't sure how old I should picture them. I would have liked a clearer distinction of the age differences between each of them and between the years that passed.

This is such a tiny little thing, though. It didn't really intervene with my reading experience.

I truly developed a big love for everyone involved at Riverton Manor, and I absolutely just *need* a movie or TV-Show based on this fantastic book!

Laura says

I had such high hopes! Our heroine, Grace, now a feisty but failing 98, spent her early life at Riverton House in the service of the Ashbury family...and then spent her adult life trying to forget about them. However, she's contacted by a filmmaker about the mysterious suicide of a World War I poet that occurred at the estate back in 1924. Is the set of the Riverton drawing room accurate? What was it like being a housemaid? Does Grace have any insight into the circumstances of the suicide? Why did the two Ashbury sisters never speak to each other again after the suicide? Grace may get sucked into remembering, but not necessarily into telling. For me this is the stuff of dreams...an English country manor, mysterious death, World War I...it should be a slam dunk! Alas, it's more like a shot that rolls around the rim for a while before someone else taps it in.

Grace's flashbacks are nicely interwoven with the present, and, as always, descriptions of life in service underscore how different society was a hundred years ago. But while much of the story of Grace's interaction with the Ashbury family is compelling, it doesn't always ring true. People just aren't metaphysically "connected" to each other — and across class barriers! — to the extent Morton imagines them. And some of the minor characters are merely caricatures. Of course the Americans are crass, insensitive, and materialistic — and naturally, that means they must be Tories — because IS there any other type of American?

On the plus side, I liked the way Morton portrays the war's impact. And, in spite of a few "revelations" that were so obvious I think they were probably intentionally obvious (but if so, why??), the twists at the end of the book really do pack a wallop. What bothered me, however, is the way the two adulterous affairs that caused most of the grief were glossed over, as though being "in love" excuses everything, and it's just an unfair coincidence that destruction follows in the wake of bad choices. Still, this is only Morton's first novel, and I liked it enough to be hopeful about her second.

Franco Santos says

Me gustó muchísimo este libro. Amo el estilo de escritura de Kate Morton, y en este se lo puede apreciar al máximo.

Las fotografías nos obligan a contemplar a las personas antes de que su destino las abrume, antes de que conozcan su final.

La historia empieza un poco lenta; **me costó engancharme**. En algunas partes también se me hizo un poco pesado. Sin embargo, la prosa, el marco y los personajes me hicieron mantenerme sumergido en las páginas hasta altas horas de la madrugada.

A partir de la segunda mitad el ritmo se acrecienta. **Olvídense de apartar el libro de sus ojos porque eso no va a ser posible.**

Tiene un final tan... tan... No sé. Fuerte, impactante, te da ganas de romper todo y gritar. **Es una de las conclusiones que más me explotaron la cabeza.**

Una novela brillante.

Catherine says

I liked the idea of this book but thought it was sloppily thought out and executed. (Stop reading here if you haven't read this book yet as spoilers follow.) I mean, really, Hannah couldn't throw the gun in the lake rather than shooting her lover? Grace couldn't tell Hannah that she didn't know shorthand and got someone else to tell her what the first note said? And why did Hannah think Grace knew shorthand, anyway? She put a lot of work into learning it herself . . . I don't recall her ever teaching Grace. In fact, it seems likely that most employers would have assumed Grace couldn't read at all. Also, why did Frederick let Grace's mother live in utter misery and solitude, and have no interest in Grace, if they had such a big love affair? The timing of Grace's latter day career, of her relationship with Albert, of her marriage, and of the birth and ages of her children was also never terribly clear.

On the sloppy side, I think the minimal dates given for the duration of Grace's later relationship with Albert and the age of their son didn't match up. Much more irritating was the mention of Riverton Hall burning -- a whole wing plus blackening of the rest of the house -- followed by a visit by Grace and her (secret? why didn't she disclose the family tie?) great niece to an apparently completely intact house.

It just didn't all fit the way it should have.

Noel says

I had been excited to try a Kate Morton book for quite some time. I'd been so sure she'd be an author I love that I had already purchased four of her books. So it is with regret that I write this review. Sigh.

I loved Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*. And I like *Downton Abbey*. So *The House at Riverton* seemed like a sure bet. It actually did feel almost like a mashup of *The Remains of the Day*, and *Downton Abbey*, but Riverton was lacking the things that make them great. *The Remains of the Day* has so much character development. It has subtle yet intense emotion. But *The House at Riverton* felt bland. Grace was our narrator, but I felt nothing for her. She was too outside the story to make a reader feel connected to the sisters, but she also didn't give much of herself to make a reader feel connected to her. *Downton Abbey* is full of interesting characters and lots of drama. While *The House at Riverton* promised suspense and passion, the majority of the book was dry and dull. The suspense and passion here was confined to the last 100 pages, mostly only the last 50. The book is 470 pages long. That's way too much time to build up to a final scene of drama.

I'm sure I'll try another Kate Morton book sometime. I've heard that her others are better than this one, but after reading this, they won't be at the top of my list.

Sandie says

This book is a must read for lovers of historical novels and enthralling, well-written, atmospheric mysteries, The House at Riverton is a literary feast for those who love writers like Margaret Atwood, Ian McEwan or Daphne DuMaurier and books reminiscent of The Forsythe Saga, Upstairs,Downstairs and Water for Elephants.

In this page-turner of a novel, beautifully written and evocative of the era in England prior to and after World War 1, the author succeeds in weaving a complex tale of passion, jealousy and intrigue utilizing the past memories of 98 year old Grace Bradley and the secret she has jealously guarded for over 60 years.

This jigsaw puzzle of a tale cleverly takes the various, seemingly insignificant, strands of Graces life and plaits them with the lives of other members of the Riverton household to form a lustrous braid with a couple of astonishing twists at its end. There is literally not a hair out of place in this fascinating journey through an era of crumbling social barriers and evolving English social morals and traditions.

This book cries out to be made into a movie. As I read, I could visualize Kate Blanchett as Hannah, Judy Dench as old Grace, Kate Winslet as young grace, Gerard Butler as Alfred, Colin Firth as Frederick, Keira Knightly as Emmalinewell you get the picture. (pun intended).

I look forward with great anticipation to Kate Mortons next literary offering. In the meantime let me offer the following: "if you read only one book this year, make it this one!"

Laura says

The House at Riverton tells the story of a Manor House in Essex during WW1 and the beginning of the 1920s, told from the perspective of a housemaid, now 98 and living in an old people's home in 1999. When she finds out that a film is being made of a tragic event at the house - the suicide of a young poet who fought in the war - she recounts her memories leading up to that night, and the part she played in it.

Of course, the story is not as simple as that, and many secrets have been kept for almost 100 years.

This book stayed with me for ages after i'd finished it. I found it quite haunting, and a lovely study of loyalty, family and the 'butterfly' effect that our decisions can have on other people's lives.

Mary Beth *Traveling Sister* says

I really enjoyed this book and Wow! The ending was so shocking!! I was not expecting it! There were so many secrets in this book which made it very suspenseful! I just loved the characters, Hannah was very mysterious and Emmeline was very wild! Grace is a maid and she doesn't want to tell her story about The House at Riverton which is a film and they try to get information from her about her stay!

There was a lot of deaths in this book, but of course there is going to be when Grace who is 98 tells her story! I loved the secrets and thought they were thrilling and some very suspenseful. Its hard to write a

review because I don't want to spoil anything! I did think the part when Emmeline went to the fortune teller and (view spoiler) I thought this was really creepy and spooky!

This was my first Kate Morton and will be reading many more.

I was surprised that Hannah let her husband and his family control her! She was strong in the beginning and then became very weak! Of course with everything that happened I would be very weak also after finding out what she went through at the ending at how Emmeline had reacted!

JoLee says

I wanted to read this book because it looked as if it had a lot of elements I really enjoy: Gothic type mystery, haunted house, family secrets, World War I, the 1920s. The book concerns sisters Hannah and Emmeline Hartford, aristocratic children who grow up over the course of the book. They chafe at the constraints of their class and find themselves floundering in the chaos of the 1920s. The other main character in the book is the narrator Grace, a housemaid at Riverton. She has her own unique connection to the Hartford sisters. Grace tells the story, practically from her deathbed as at 99, of the two sisters and how they witnessed a modernist poet commit suicide in 1924. Of course, things aren't really as they seem, and each of the characters plays a big part in the poet's death. So the premise was interesting, but I found the book to be kind of boring. It took too long for any of the secrets to be revealed and then when they were it was really underwhelming. I also wasn't a fan of the lack of denouement.

Kate says

I wanted to like this. High drama and love triangles at the country estate of a rich family during the Edwardian era -- all ending in the famous suicide on the family estate of a post-war poet. What could go wrong? Well, as it turns out, it could feel like a cobbled-together collection of Upstairs-Downstairs stereotypes, played-out female character archetypes, and plot twists and sub-plots that, after lots of set-up, amount to very little. Also, the book is told in flashbacks, and there were structure and continuity problems that annoyed even me, and I think I'm usually pretty chill about that kind of thing.

I just went online and noticed that reviewers disagree with me. They call it "engrossing" and the characters "intriguing." Whatever. I stand by my story. It was lame.
