

The Lake House

Author Background

Kate Morton

Born: 1976 in Berri, South Australia

Raised: Tamborine Mountain, Queensland.

Lives: Brisbane

Born in South Australia, Kate Morton's early years were spent in various locations before her family settled in Tamborine Mountain, Queensland.

After finishing school Morton completed a Licentiate in Speech and Drama from Trinity College London. However Morton came to the realisation that her interest lay with words and stories, rather than performing, and she began writing in earnest. Graduating from the University of Queensland with First Class Honours in English Literature, Morton took up a scholarship to complete a Masters degree focusing on tragedy in Victorian literature.

Morton's first published novel, *The Shifting Fog*, won General Fiction Book of the Year at the 2007 Australian Book Industry Awards. Published internationally as *The House at Riverton*, the novel was the *Sunday Times* number one bestseller in the UK in 2007, a *New York Times* bestseller in 2008 and was nominated for Most Popular Book at the 2008 British Book Awards.

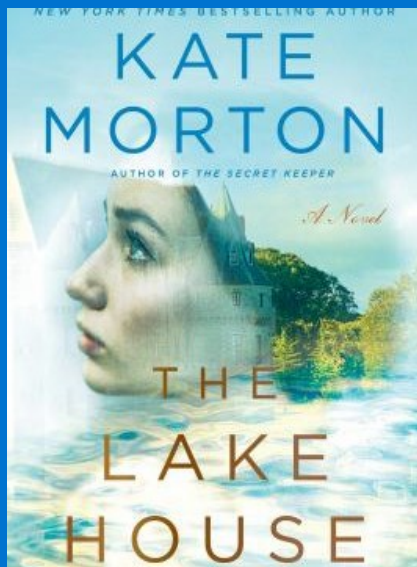
Morton's second book, *The Forgotten Garden*, was a number one bestseller in Australia and Spain, and a *Sunday Times* number one bestseller in the UK in 2008. It won General Fiction Book of the Year at the 2009 Australian Book Industry Awards and was a *New York Times* bestseller in 2009. *The Distant Hours* was an international bestseller in 2010 and won General Fiction Book of the Year at the 2011 Australian Book Industry Awards. *The Secret Keeper* was a *New York Times* bestseller and has won a number of other awards including the 2013 Australian Book Industry Award for General Fiction Book of the Year.

Published in 2015, *The Lake House* was a *New York Times* bestseller and a number one bestseller in Canada and Australia. Discussing her inspiration for writing, Morton has said:

"The kernel of The Lake House was made up of three ideas: I'd long wanted to write about a missing child; I heard the intriguing tale of an abandoned house; and, I was determined to write a book that could be properly termed a 'mystery'. Once those ideas came together, the Cornish setting suggested itself, and the story really began to come to life." [Source: Goodreads]

Morton has been published in 42 countries and in 34 languages.

Source: Author website, Publisher website and Goodreads website.



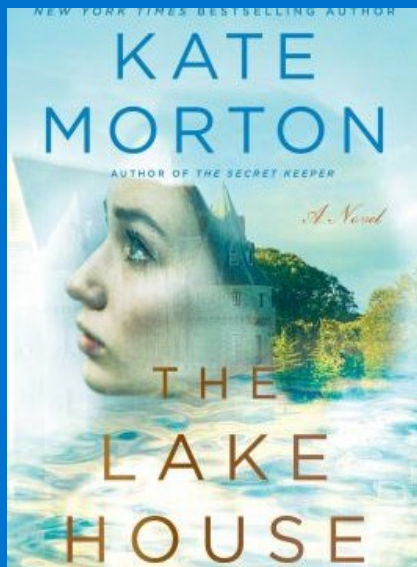
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Book Summary

Living on her family's idyllic lakeside estate in Cornwall, England, Alice Edevane is a bright, inquisitive, and precociously talented sixteen-year-old who loves to write stories.

One Midsummer's eve, after a beautiful party drawing hundreds of guests to the estate has ended, the Edevanes discover that their youngest child, eleven-month-old Theo, has vanished without a trace, a tragedy that tears the family apart in ways they never imagined.

Decades later, Alice is living in London, having enjoyed a long successful career as an author. Theo's case has never been solved. Miles away, Sadie Sparrow, a young detective in the London police force, is staying at her grandfather's house in Cornwall. While out walking, she stumbles upon the old Edevane estate—now crumbling and covered with vines, clearly abandoned long ago. Her curiosity is sparked, setting off a series of events that will bring her and Alice together and reveal shocking truths about a past long gone . . . yet more present than ever.



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Discussion Questions

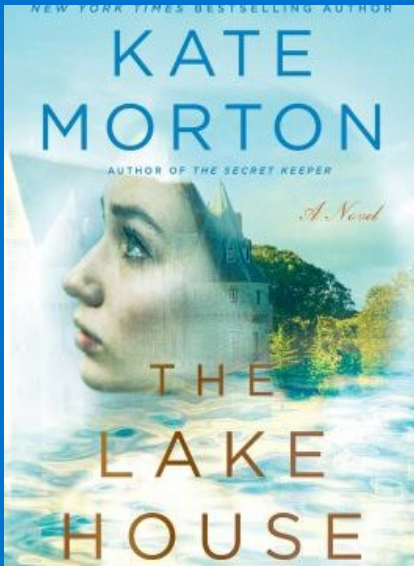
1. Mysteries, twists, family secrets, carefully-placed red herrings, and unexpected revelations are typical of Kate Morton's novels. What parts of *The Lake House* were key to your enjoyment of the story? Alternatively, what did not appeal to you about Morton's style?
2. Morton recreates different time periods in Cornwall and London - the early 1930s and 2003. Do you feel that Morton was successful in moving the reader between historical and more contemporary times? Do you enjoy novels which shift between past and present in this way?
3. Sadie, Alice, and Eleanor are all strong women with flaws. How did you feel towards these characters and their imperfections? Did your view of the characters change over the course of the novel?
4. Morton poses the question of what moral obligation each character has to another within their particular stories. Were there decisions made within the novel with which you strongly disagreed? Or could you see yourself making similar decisions?
5. Sadie Sparrow's job as a detective and Alice's bestselling crime-writing career allows an interesting incursion of the crime genre into *The Lake House's* gothic mystery genre. Did you enjoy this mix of genres?
6. Morton has cited Enid Blyton's *The Enchanted Wood* as the book that most influenced her to become a writer, saying "*when I look at the books I write now, I can see her lingering influence.*" Do you see the influence of the well-known children's author in *The Lake House*?
7. *The Lake House* is the English translation of *Loeanneth*, the house's Cornish name. Have you read other novels in which a house features within the text as vital and alive – like a character in its own right?

Just for fun

8. With its sprawling estate, *The Lake House* has a cinematic feel. If the book were made into a film, who would you cast? (Hint: you might cast well-known actors or, alternatively, the undiscovered talent amongst members of your book club.)

Questions adapted from the publisher, Simon and Schuster.

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Reviews

Bestselling storyteller Morton ... excels in this mystery set against the gothic backdrop of 1930s England.... Morton's plotting is impeccable, and her finely wrought characters, brought together in the end by Sparrow's investigation, are as surprised as readers will be by the astonishing conclusion.

Publishers Weekly

Morton is especially skilled at developing her characters and fleshing them out into reality. She dives deep into the psyche of each, raising details about their lives and what each knows about the night of the disappearance. The loss of the child, Theo, haunts the characters—both those who knew him and those who are just learning of him after so many decades. ...

[Morton] moves back and forth through the seven decades of mystery without missing a beat. The story is easy to follow, the clues regarding the mysterious disappearance of the child are there for the eye to catch, the foreshadowing and red herrings make the story intriguing. ...

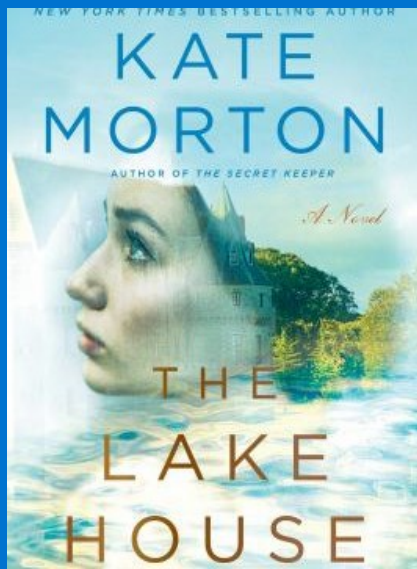
Morton's grasp of the language and her strong vocabulary give clarity to her descriptions of places and events that allow the reader to sail through the book, not wanting to put it down. This clarity also gives the reader the ability to pick the book up after several hours and never feel at a loss as to where they are in the story.

Judith Reveal, *New York Review of Books*

The Lake House is a polished and multi-layered read from a writer at the top of her craft. It retains elements fans have grown to love in Morton's books: atmospheric, gothic mystery; house-as-character.... However, Morton ups the ante ... by bringing in a detective (a nice link to the popularity of detective stories at the time of Theo's disappearance)

Morton twines together familiar themes of love, abandonment, mother-child separation and relationships, and murky pasts; twists are added through explorations of post-traumatic stress disorder and guilt. The result is a completely engrossing and dynamic read that's hard to set aside once readers are sucked in.... Ultimately, I did pick the twist, but the story was so richly and beautifully told it didn't matter.

Monique Mulligan, *The Blurb Magazine*



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Reviews (*continued*)

A lush, atmospheric tale of intertwined destinies, this latest novel from a masterful storyteller is an enthralling, thoroughly satisfying read.

Goodreads

As the various skeins intersect, the story becomes unwieldy; using multiple narrators, Morton can believably withhold information to build suspense, but when such selective nondisclosure is carried to extremes, frustrated readers may be tempted to practice their skimming. An atmospheric but overlong history of family secrets and their tormented gatekeepers.

Kirkus Reviews

As promising as *The Lake House* was, it ended up falling a bit flat for me. It started out slowly but soon picked up the pace and I raced through the middle section. But then everything changed.... The last few chapters felt very rushed, as if the entire story needed to be wrapped up in as few words as possible and those lost words were the important ones. There were a few characters that were fleshed out early on and just disappeared, while others were underdeveloped. I can't imagine that this was done on purpose because [Morton's] usually so great at weaving everything together, but the last few chapters just didn't *fit*.

The speculative part of me is wondering whether this is because [Morton] flexed her writing muscles by venturing into a more traditional style of mystery writing with *The Lake House*. Her books are generally ones that I can *languish* in; they are rich with detail, well developed characters, and a slow unravelling of the facts. This one is a whodunnit featuring a tenacious detective with an overwhelming ending. While I'm not opposed to the concept of mixing the two styles, I did not enjoy its implementation and was left disappointed.

Allison Hiltz, *The Book Wheel*

In short (and I'll keep it short as the book was so wretchedly long), *The Lake House* was too contrived; had far too many convenient parallels between the heroines of the 1930s story and the 2003 story; had a stupid number of coincidences; had too many words; and had a ludicrous ending....

Kate W, *Booksaremyfavouriteandbest* [blog]