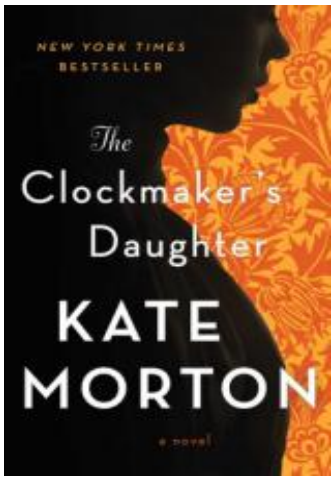
ReadingGroupGuides
The online community for reading groups

The Clockmaker's Daughter

by Kate Morton



About the Book

In the summer of 1862, a group of young artists led by the passionate and talented Edward Radcliffe descends upon Birchwood Manor on the banks of the Upper Thames. Their plan: to spend a secluded summer month in a haze of inspiration and creativity. But by the time their stay is over, one woman has been shot dead while another has disappeared; a priceless heirloom is missing; and Edward Radcliffe's life is in ruins.

Over 150 years later, Elodie Winslow, a young archivist in London, uncovers a leather satchel containing two seemingly unrelated items: a sepia photograph of an arresting-looking woman in Victorian clothing, and an artist?s sketchbook containing the drawing of a twin-gabled house on the bend of a river.

Why does Birchwood Manor feel so familiar to Elodie? And who is the beautiful woman in the photograph? Will she ever give up her secrets?

Discussion Guide

1. THE CLOCKMAKER'S DAUGHTER begins with the assertion that ?We came to Birchwood Manor because Edward said that it was haunted. It wasn?t. Not then.? (p. 3) Who is narrating this passage? How does it create a sense of mystery surrounding Birchwood Manor? What are your initial impressions of the ground and house at Birchwood Manor?

2. Birdie describes Lily Millington as ?her salvation.? (p. 99) How does Lily help Birdie adjust to life at Mrs. Mack?s? What survival skills does Lily teach Birdie? How else does Lily impact Birdie?s life and legacy?

3. Birchwood Manor feels like another character in the book. Edward writes ?it has called to me for a long time, you see, for my new house and I are not strangers.? (p. 210) Discuss the connection that Edward feels to the house. What other characters feel a strong connection? Have you ever felt an attachment to a house where you?ve lived or visited?

4. Why do you think Kate Morton chose to title her novel THE CLOCKMAKER'S DAUGHTER? Who is she? How does her story tie the other plotlines in the novel together? Did you find any of the connections surprising?

5. One of Edward?s most famous paintings is *View from the Attic Window*. Describe the painting? Birdie says that when she views the painting, ?I do not associate it with the fields outside Birchwood Manor...it makes me think instead of small dark spaces, and stale air.? (p. 337) Why does *View from the Attic Window* make her feel claustrophobic? Describe the inspiration behind the painting.

6. Describe Elodie?s relationship with Alastair. She ?had been flattered when [he] asked her to marry him.? (p. 24) Explain this statement. Why do you think that Elodie says yes to Alastair?s proposal? When does Elodie begin to realize they?re not well suited?

7. Why do you think that Pale Joe shows Birdie kindness? Describe their friendship. What does each offer the other? Were you surprised to realize who Pale Joe is? Why do you think Birdie is willing to share her nickname with Pale Joe?

8. Storytelling is a central theme in the novel. When Elodie asks her father about the bedtime story from her childhood, he tells her that he thought it might be too scary for a child but that Lauren, Elodie?s mother, felt that ?childhood was a frightening time and that hearing scary stories was a way of feeling less alone.? (p. 20) Do you agree with Lauren? What other purposes does storytelling serve? How does Kate Morton connect the characters within THE CLOCKMAKER'S DAUGHTER?

9. Penelope suggests that Elodie walk down the aisle at her wedding accompanied by a video of her mother, Lauren Adler, playing the cello. Why do you think that Penelope makes the suggestion? What does Pippa think? Do you agree with her? Why or why not? Were you surprised by Elodie?s final decision with regard to the videos? Explain your answer.

10. Elodie handles the archives of James Stratton. Who is he and why are his archives significant? Were you surprised to learn of his connection to Birchwood Manor? Based on James?s romantic history, ?[i]t seemed to Elodie almost as if he?d set our purposely to choose women who wouldn?t --- or couldn?t --- make him happy.? (p. 16) Do you agree? Why do you think that James chose the partners that he did?

11. According to Birdie, Fanny ?has become a tragic heroine, impossible though that is for one who knew her in life to believe.? (p. 131) What did you think of Fanny? Describe her relationship with Edward. Compare his relationships with Fanny and Birdie. How is Edward different when he is with Birdie?

12. What did you think of Mrs. Mack? What kind of activities does she require Birdie to take part in to earn her keep? Why do you think that Mrs. Mack takes pains to remind Birdie that her mother had been a proper lady? Do you think she takes good care of Birdie?

13. When Ada learns that she is going to be staying at Miss Radcliffe?s School for Young Ladies, the narrator writes

?School. Young ladies. Welcome. Ada liked words --- she collected them --- but those four hit her like bricks.? (p. 159) What do you think of Ada?s school and how her parents told her that she would be attending?

14. ?Ada?s parents had left her at Miss Radcliffe?s School for Young Ladies in the misguided expectation that she would be magically transformed into a proper English schoolgirl.? (p. 164) Do you agree that this is the mission of Miss Radcliffe?s school? Does she achieve it? Explain your answer.

15. What did you think of Jack? How does his life intersect with Elodie? What do they discover together? How does their chance encounter affect their lives?

Author Bio

Kate Morton is the award-winning, *New York Times* bestselling author of THE HOUSE AT RIVERTON, THE FORGOTTEN GARDEN, THE DISTANT HOURS, THE SECRET KEEPER, THE LAKE HOUSE, THE CLOCKMAKER'S DAUGHTER and HOMECOMING. Her books are published in 38 languages and have been #1 bestsellers worldwide. She is a native Australian, holds degrees in dramatic art and English literature. She lives with her family in London and Australia.

The Clockmaker's Daughter
by Kate Morton

Publication Date: May 21, 2019
Genres: Fiction, Historical Fiction
Paperback: 496 pages
Publisher: Washington Square Press
ISBN-10: 145164941X
ISBN-13: 9781451649413