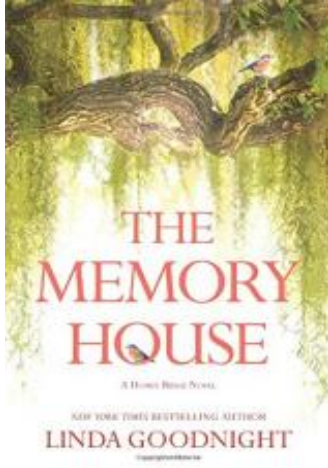


# The Memory House: A Honey Ridge Novel

by Linda Goodnight

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## About the Book

*New York Times* bestselling author Linda Goodnight welcomes you to Honey Ridge, Tennessee, and a house that's rich with secrets and brimming with sweet possibilities.

Memories of motherhood and marriage are fresh for Julia Presley --- though tragedy took away both years ago. Finding comfort in the routine of running the Peach Orchard Inn, she lets the historic, mysterious place fill the voids of love and family. No more pleasure of a man's gentle kiss. No more joy in hearing a child call her Mommy. Life is calm, unchanging?until a stranger with a young boy and soul-deep secrets shows up in her Tennessee town and disrupts the loneliness of her world.

Julia suspects there's more to Eli Donovan's past than his motherless son, Alex. There's a reason he's chasing redemption and bent on earning it with a new beginning in Honey Ridge. Offering the guarded man work renovating the inn, she glimpses someone who --- like her --- has a heart in need of restoration. But with the chance discovery of a dusty stack of love letters buried within the lining of an old trunk, the long-dead ghosts of a Civil War romance envelop Julia and Eli, connecting them to the inn's violent history and challenging them both to risk facing yesterday's darkness for a future bright with hope and healing.

## Discussion Guide

1. Why do you think this book is titled THE MEMORY HOUSE? What role do memories, both past and present, play in the novel? Discuss the memories that define Eli and Julia and cause them to be who they are at the beginning of the story.

2. Julia and Eli find antique marbles in the antebellum mansion. To whom did they originally belong? How do the marbles come to be in the present-day inn? How do the characters feel whenever they find one? What role do the marbles play in connecting the past with the present?
3. In the opening chapter, both Julia and Eli are wounded souls. Describe their characters and personalities. Do they change during the course of the story? If so, how? And what causes the changes?
4. In the opening line, Eli thinks that freedom is its own kind of prison. What does he mean? Do you agree with this statement? How can freedom be a prison?
5. Grief and loss are major themes of *THE MEMORY HOUSE*. Describe the grief or loss that each of these characters --- Julia, Eli, Charlotte, Lizzie and Ben --- had to bear. What coping mechanism did each use to deal with the pain? Were these negative or positive mechanisms, and how did the choice affect each character's life?
6. Discuss the parallels between the two story lines. How does the past affect the present? What do the characters in the present learn from the past? How does this affect their relationships and help them heal?
7. Mother-and-son relationships are integral to *The Memory House*. Discuss Julia, Charlotte, Mindy and Gloria and their relationships with their sons. How are the mothers alike? How are they different?
8. "The child is father of the man" is quoted in the opening. What does this mean? How does this apply to Eli? What past incident began his downward spiral and brought him to the opening chapter? What part does Alex play in his father's journey to healing? Would Eli have ever healed if he had refused to be Alex's father?
9. Charlotte was restricted and defined by the expectations of women during the 19th century. Cite examples where she bows to those expectations. Discuss the times when she did not.
10. Charlotte and Will cared deeply for each other. Why could they not express their feelings? Why was Charlotte determined to remain faithful to her husband even though he had not been faithful to her? How did she succeed? How did she fail? What incident occurred that allowed her to speak her true feelings within the context of her letters?
11. Discuss the significance of Michael's garden. What does it symbolize to Julia? What part does Eli play? Why does Alex place his beloved marbles in the fountain?

## Author Bio

A *New York Times* and *USA TODAY* bestseller, Linda Goodnight is the winner of the RITA and other highly acclaimed awards for her emotional fiction. Active in orphan ministry, this former nurse and teacher enjoys writing fiction that carries a message of hope and light in a sometimes dark world. A country girl, she lives in Oklahoma.

## Critical Praise

?Linda Goodnight is a genuine treasure. THE MEMORY HOUSE is a beautiful, rich, unforgettable story filled with tenderness and heart.?

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