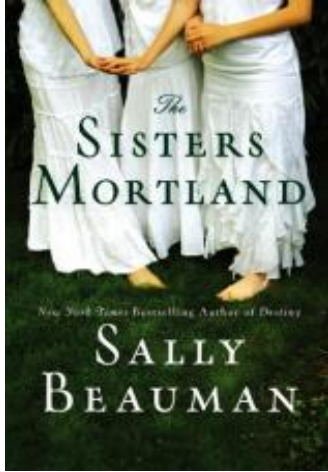


# The Sisters Mortland

by Sally Beauman

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## About the Book

Summer 1967: As an artist paints a portrait of thirteen-year-old Maisie and her older sisters-arrogant, beautiful Julia and brilliant, bookish Finn-Maisie embarks upon a portrait of her own: a secret account of her troubled family and her village friend Daniel. Before the end of the summer, a terrible accident will befall the family.

Winter 1991: As the now-legendary portrait of the Mortland sisters is featured in a London retrospective, Daniel seeks to free himself of his obsession with the mysterious sisters by unraveling the secrets of that fateful summer?

## Discussion Guide

1. This book involves a series of mysteries. Are any of the characters still a mystery to you at the end of the book? Which mysteries are left unsolved or ambiguous? Why do you think this is?
2. One of Maisie's talents is communicating with the dead. Who are the other ghosts in this novel besides her nuns?
3. A. E. Housman wrote, "That is the land of lost content,/I see it shining plain,/The happy highways where I went/And cannot come again." In this case, the "land of lost content" is Suffolk, but it could be anywhere. How important is the setting of Suffolk, and why? What about London?
4. Though the novel centers on three female characters, much of it is written from Dan's point of view, and the women are immortalized by Lucas's painting. How do these male perspectives affect your view of the three sisters?
5. Maisie and Dan, the first two narrators in the novel, are both outsiders, each of a different sort. How does the outsider perspective inform the telling of this story?

6. Did you find Julia unsympathetic in the early parts of the novel? How does this change when she becomes the final narrator? Is she an outsider, as Maisie and Dan are, in any way?

7. Lucas's drawings of Dan become the triptych *Trinity Daniel*. What are the three components of Dan's character?

8. In the course of the novel, several characters appear blind to their true feelings and those of others. Toward the end, Dan says of Finn that he has "loved a woman who never existed." Is Dan right, or is he still denying a different truth, one that's apparent to readers? What about Julia?

## Author Bio

Sally Beaman is the author of six novels, including the bestselling and acclaimed *DESTINY* and *REBECCA'S TALE*. She has also published two works of nonfiction, including *THE ROYAL SHAKESPEARE COMPANY: A History of Ten Decades*. Her novels have been translated into more than 20 languages. A journalist in Britain and the US before she became a novelist, Sally Beaman lives with her family in London and Gloucestershire, England.

## Critical Praise

"Haunting?an absorbing mystery that'll have you turning pages until the very end."

*?Entertainment Weekly*

"Gorgeously wrought?a masterly rendering of fragile states of consciousness."

*?Kirkus Reviews (starred review)*

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