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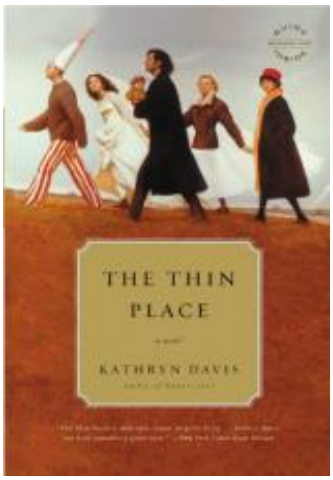
The Thin Place

by Kathryn Davis



About the Book

In a thin place, according to legend, the membrane separating this world from the spirit world is almost nonexistent.

The small New England town of Varennes is such a place, and Kathryn Davis transports us there-revealing a surprising pageant of life as, in the course of one summer, Varennes's tranquillity is shattered by the arrival of a threatening outsider, worldly and otherworldly forces come into play, and a young local girl finds her miraculous gift for resurrecting the dead tested by the conflict between logic and wish.

Discussion Guide

1. Kathryn Davis once said that she "didn't want to write a polemic, but . . . I'm appalled by the disregard human beings have for the place where we live." In what ways does **The Thin Place** address the impact humans have on the environment?

1. A "thin place," according to Celtic legend, is a place where the membrane separating the physical world from the spiritual world is almost nonexistent. How does this idea play out in the novel? Do you believe that there are some places on the earth that are more connected to a spiritual plane than others?

1. At the beginning of **The Thin Place**, Mees Kipp discovers that she has the ability to bring the dead back to life. Although this may be the most startling example, the theme of resurrection also surfaces at several other points in Davis's novel. Identify some of these passages.

1. Davis uses sermons, horoscopes, almanacs, and police blotters, among other things, to give a vivid and complete picture of life in the New England town of Varennes. What other novels have you read that provide all-encompassing portraits of specific places? How are they different from this novel?

1. Helen Zeebrugge celebrates her ninety-third birthday during the course of **The Thin Place**. In what ways is Helen as vital as the younger characters in the novel? What special wisdom comes with her age?

1. How do the narrator's references to geological time affect your thoughts about the significance of the people of Varennes? The value of life on earth? What does the line "Human time is much too thin to be discerned" (page 72) conjure up in your mind?

1. In what ways are Sunny, Mees, and Lorna similar as sixth-grade girls, and in what ways, apart from Mees's special powers, do they differ? How have their families affected their interests and personalities?

1. Does Kathryn Davis's flexible use of the colloquial, as well as her mastery of formal and lyrical language, help you to accept the fantastic aspects of **The Thin Place**? Does her sense of humor?

1. What clues about outsiders led you to suspect that the safety of Varennes would be threatened in the end? What is the larger threat to all living creatures that the novel considers?

10) In the precarious contemporary time of **The Thin Place**, how is Kathryn Davis able to convey joy?

Author Bio

Kathryn Davis is the author of eight novels, including THE SILK ROAD and DUPLEX. She is the senior fiction writer on the faculty of the writing program at Washington University.

Critical Praise

"A fearless book-brazenly original and magnificently odd. . . . Kathryn Davis is one of the most inventive novelists at work today."

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