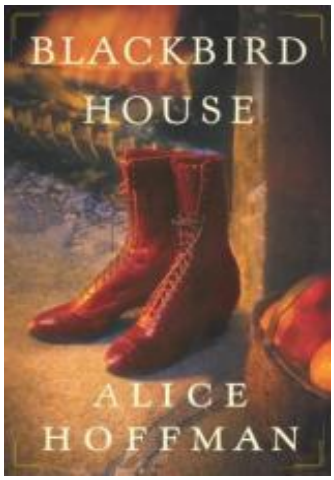
Blackbird House

by Alice Hoffman



About the Book

With "incantatory prose" that "sweeps over the reader like a dream," (*Philadelphia Inquirer*), Hoffman follows her celebrated bestseller **The Probable Future**, with an evocative work that traces the lives of the various occupants of an old Massachusetts house over a span of two hundred years.

In a rare and gorgeous departure, beloved novelist Alice Hoffman weaves a web of tales, all set in Blackbird House. This small farm on the outer reaches of Cape Cod is a place that is as bewitching and alive as the characters we meet: Violet, a brilliant girl who is in love with books and with a man destined to betray her; Lysander Wynn, attacked by a halibut as big as a horse, certain that his life is ruined until a boarder wearing red boots arrives to change everything; Maya Cooper, who does not understand the true meaning of the love between her mother and father until it is nearly too late. From the time of the British occupation of Massachusetts to our own modern world, family after family's lives are inexorably changed, not only by the people they love but by the lives they lead inside Blackbird House.

These interconnected narratives are as intelligent as they are haunting, as luminous as they are unusual. Inside Blackbird House more than a dozen men and women learn how love transforms us and how it is the one lasting element in our lives. The past both dissipates and remains contained inside the rooms of Blackbird House, where there are terrible secrets, inspired beauty, and, above all else, a spirit of coming home.

From the writer *Time* has said tells "truths powerful enough to break a reader's heart" comes a glorious travelogue through time and fate, through loss and love and survival. Welcome to **Blackbird House**.

Discussion Guide

1. Abandonment and loss are important themes in **Blackbird House**. In what ways do the characters deal with these issues? Which characters are similar in their responses? What other themes do the stories have in common?

2. In the first story, Coral sees several signs of impending doom. What are they? How does the return of the (now white) blackbird confirm her worst fears? What does the white crow symbolize throughout the other tales?

3. What other images from nature does Alice Hoffman use throughout **Blackbird House**? What do they represent?

4. Both Vincent Hadley and Ruth Blackbird Hill are helpless to save their dying family members. What effect does that have on their lives? What other characters are affected by helplessness?

5. How does Ruth's daughter help her to come to terms with the death of her husband? What other characters lose their true loves? How do they cope?

6. In "Lionheart," Violet West asks her husband if he thinks she has made a mistake by pushing Lion to go to Harvard. did she make a mistake? What do you think would have happened if Lion had stayed at Blackbird House?

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8. In "Wedding and Snow and Ice," Jamie Farrell discovers that neighbor Rosalyn Brooks has shot her husband in self-defense and helps her to dispose of the body. What do you think happened between Grace and Rosalyn that night? Do you think she ever discussed it with her son? What effect did the events of that evening have on her own marriage?

9. In "India," Maya and Kalkin Cooper feel emotionally abandoned by their parents. What contributes to the deep misunderstanding between them? Why does it take the deaths of her father and brother for Maya to be able to see the situation more clearly?

10. What historic events tie the stories together? What role does war play in the lives of the residents of Blackbird House?

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12. In "Wish You Were Here," Emma goes to Blackbird House with the intention of selling. Do you think she followed through with that plan?

Author Bio

Alice Hoffman is the author of more than 30 works of fiction, including WHEN WE FLEW AWAY, THE WITCHES OF CAMBRIDGE, THE INVISIBLE HOUR, THE BOOK OF MAGIC, MAGIC LESSONS: The Prequel to *Practical Magic*, THE WORLD THAT WE KNEW, THE RULES OF MAGIC, FAITHFUL, THE MARRIAGE OF OPPOSITES, THE MUSEUM OF EXTRAORDINARY THINGS, THE DOVEKEEPERS, PRACTICAL MAGIC, THE RED GARDEN, and the Oprah's Book Club selection HERE ON EARTH. She lives near Boston.

Photo Credit: Alyssa Peek

Critical Praise

"...[I]t certainly seems as though [Hoffman's] entrancing and mythological tales flow like water from a spring, and her new book is no exception....As the stories leapfrog from colonial times toward the present, Hoffman, a subtle conjurer of telling details and ironic predicaments, orchestrates intense romances and profound sacrifices. Those who live in Blackbird House, by turns brilliant, crazy, and courageous, follow their dreams, endure nightmares, and find that their numinous home is as much a part of their being as their parents' DNA"--- *Booklist*

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