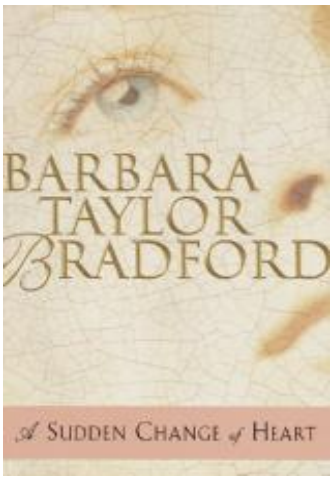
Sudden Change of Heart

by Barbara Taylor Bradford



About the Book

Barbara Taylor Bradford has become one of the world's most cherished storytellers, having written fourteen bestselling novels that went on to become enduring favorites. In **A Sudden Change of Heart**, readers are once again invited to fall under the spell of a magical weaver of tales at her most seductive.

Laura Valiant and Claire Benson are best friends from childhood and have remained exceptionally close through the turmoil of adult life. They have much to celebrate: Laura is a partner in a challenging and successful art dealership in New York, and her marriage to the handsome and always amiable Doug seems to come right from a storybook. Though divorced from her French husband, Philippe Lavillard, Claire delights in her precocious daughter, Natasha.

But the two friends' lives do not follow the paths we imagine they will, and when Claire is confronted with sudden tragedy, she naturally turns to Laura for help. When the long-hidden history of the Lavillard family intersects with Laura's investigation into artwork stolen by the Nazis during the war, Barbara Taylor Bradford's gripping tale reaches a dramatic and unexpected crescendo.

A Sudden Change of Heart revolves around overcoming adversity as well as celebrating life's joy; ultimately, it is a moving expression of the triumph of the human spirit and the healing power of love.

Discussion Guide

1. Talk about the role of the prologue in setting the scene and holding the promise of the story.

2. What are some of the different "changes of heart" that occur in this novel?

3. In your experience, and in this novel, when people have endured great tragedy, personal or societal, are they destined

to live unhappily for long periods of time? In other words, does tragedy demand its due?

4. Discuss the author's use of art and the language surrounding it to convey emotion in this novel.

5. Is the beauty of art or nature powerful enough to battle the evil and ugliness in the world?

6. When you first meet Philippe and Rosa in the early pages of the novel, what were your impressions? Did you question Laura's reaction to them? Talk about the author's purpose here.

7. Analyze how the author uses the tale of stolen art to bolster the emotional tale of love and friendship and vice versa.

8. Comment upon the author's use of foreshadowing in regard to plot and character development in the novel. For instance, in Doug's reason for ending his marriage.

9. In the novel, characters often speculate on the inner lives of other characters, trying to guess the experiences or sorrows they've undergone that make them the people they are. Examine the role of secrets in this novel.

10. The author uses the Nazi plundering of art as a plot device and a morality tale. Discuss this dual role.

11. In one passage, Megan Valiant reminisces about her children and grandchildren and says, "You shouldn't have favorites, but you always did" (page 141). Is this true in your experience of parenthood or grandparenthood?

12. Laura is a direct, forthright woman who believes "there's a solution to everything" (page 160). Discuss her characteristics and temperament and how they fit, or seem at odds with, the work she does.

13. At one point in the novel, Hercule notes, "Sadly, women with successful careers were not always so lucky in their personal lives" (page 170). Do you agree with this observation? Is it true to your life or the lives of others you know?

14. Is the novel primarily Laura's story? Claire's? Both?

15. The strength of the Valiant family is a theme in the novel. But at one point in regard to the number of people in the family, Doug reflects, "There's only you, Laura" (page 234). How does the author redefine family so that it fits her theme?

16. Do you think Claire anticipated Laura and Philippe's relationship? Hoped for it?

17. Rosa speaks of the difficulties that children of Holocaust survivors sometimes have--the odd jealousy they may feel. Talk about this issue as presented in this novel or in your own experience.

18. Rosa and Claire were both silenced. Discuss this as a cause of their antipathy toward each other and their final coming together.

Author Bio

Barbara Taylor Bradford, OBE, was one of the world's best-loved storytellers. Her 1979 debut novel, A WOMAN OF SUBSTANCE, ranks as one of the top 10 bestselling books of all time, with more than 30 million copies in print. All her novels to date have been major worldwide bestsellers.

Barbara was born in Leeds, West Yorkshire, the only child of Freda and Winston Taylor. She grew up in the Leeds suburb of Armley and left school at 15 for the typing pool at the *Yorkshire Evening Post*. At 16 she was a reporter, and at 18 she became the paper?s first woman?s page editor. By the time she was 20, she had moved to London where she became a fashion editor and columnist on Fleet Street. Barbara started writing fiction when she was just seven, and sold her first short story to a magazine for seven shillings and sixpence when she was 10 years old.

Barbara?s books have sold more than 91 million copies worldwide in more than 90 countries and 40 languages. Ten of her books were made into Emmy-nominated miniseries and television movies by her late husband, the film producer Robert Bradford.

In 2007, Barbara was awarded an OBE by Queen Elizabeth II in the Queen's Birthday Honours list for her contributions to literature. A passionate supporter of literacy, she was an ambassador for the National Literacy Trust; in 2019, she was made an ambassador for Women in Journalism and in the same year was presented with The Leeds Award, which recognized her loyalty to, and depiction of, her Yorkshire roots. Her original manuscripts are archived at the Brotherton Library at Leeds University, alongside the works of the Brontë sisters.

Barbara passed away in 2024 at the age of 91 following a short illness.

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