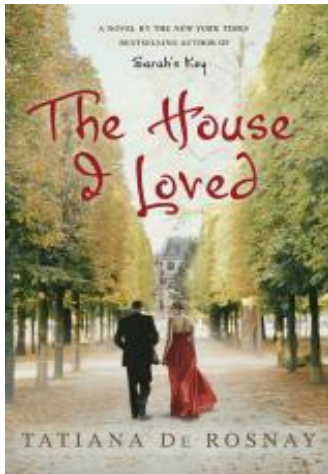


The House I Loved

by Tatiana de Rosnay



About the Book

Paris, France: 1860s. Hundreds of houses are being razed, whole neighborhoods reduced to ashes. By order of Emperor Napoleon III, Baron Haussmann has set into motion a series of large-scale renovations that will permanently alter the face of old Paris, molding it into a "modern city." The reforms will erase generations of history --- and in the midst of the tumult, one woman will take a stand.

Rose Bazelet is determined to fight against the destruction of her family home until the very end. As others flee, she stakes her claim in the basement of the old house on rue Childebert, ignoring the sounds of change that come closer and closer each day. Attempting to overcome the loneliness of her daily life, she begins to write letters to Armand, her beloved late husband. And as she delves into the ritual of remembering, Rose is forced to come to terms with a secret that has been buried deep in her heart for 30 years.

Discussion Guide

1. One of the central elements of the novel is Rose's deep and abiding love for the house in which she spent her married life, which becomes apparent from her many memories tied to every room. What does the house represent for Rose and how did it change her life? By the end of the novel, it seems as though Rose views her house as the most important thing in her life. Although others would see the house as a possession, do you think Rose views it that way? Have you ever had this experience of loving a place or a thing as deeply as if it were a living person?

- 2.** Baron Haussmann was described by his opponents as the "Atilla of the straight line" and "the Ripper Baron", nicknames that Rose approved of. But Alexandrine, the flower girl, does not agree, and has another point of view, that of a necessary progress that Paris badly needed. How do Rose's and Alexandrine's opinions differ and why? Whose do you feel closest to?
- 3.** Rose loves her son Baptiste deeply, despite the fact that he was associated with an extremely difficult time of her life ? and more than she seems to love their natural daughter, Violette. Why do you think this is? Do you think it's true to life or even possible to love someone (or something) who comes out of intense hardship? Why or why not? Have you ever experienced or seen relationships like those which Rose has with each of her children?
- 4.** Secrets are an important theme throughout *The House I Loved*. By the end of the novel, we learn that Rose has kept a devastating secret for her entire life from everyone she holds dear. How do you think it affects a person to keep such an important secret for so long? How did it affect Rose? Have you ever had a similar experience?
- 5.** In a sense, Rose's letters to her husband throughout the novel are her way of finally revealing her secret. Do you see any purpose in her telling the secret at this point in her life, with her husband already gone? Does it change or help her? And if so, how?
- 6.** Between the years of 1852 and 1870, Napoleon III and Baron Haussman remodeled major sections of Paris in an attempt to bring the city into the "modern" era. Did you know anything about this major period of time in Paris's history before reading this novel? What surprised or interested you about how Tatiana recreated that era?
- 7.** How do you feel that Rose's secret past (the episode she hides from her husband and entourage) relates to what Haussmann, the "ripper Baron," is doing to Paris? How exactly does Rose, in the final pages, describe her personal ordeal and compare it to Haussmann's tearing down of her home?
- 8.** Flowers play an important part in this novel. Discuss what Rose learns through the flower-shop and Alexandrine's job as a florist. Pick out the rare roses and their names, and how Tatiana de Rosnay uses the symbol of roses and flowers throughout the book.
- 9.** Alexandrine the flower-girl, and Gilbert, the ragpicker, are close to Rose, in different ways. Discuss the differences and similarities of their relationship with Rose, of their secret past, of how they each try to help Rose.
- 10.** The elegant Baronne de Vresse fascinates Rose with her fashionable crinolines and the balls she attends in Paris and Biarritz. Rose loves clothes and fashion, yet she strongly disapproves of the fashionable Emperor and Empress. Why do you think this is so? How does it speak to who Rose is as a character?
- 11.** Rose discovers the joys of reading late in life. How and when does this happen? What is the first book she falls in love with? Who are the authors she most enjoys reading? Have you read them? How did you fall under the spell of reading?

12. If you have read **Sarah's Key** and **A Secret Kept**, Tatiana's previous novels, can you pick up a couple of themes that are common to all three books?

Author Bio

Tatiana de Rosnay is the author of over 10 novels, including the *New York Times* bestseller SARAH'S KEY, an international sensation with over 11 million copies in 44 countries worldwide. Together with Dan Brown, Stephenie Meyer and Stieg Larsson, she has been named one of the top 10 fiction writers in Europe. De Rosnay lives in Paris.

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Publication Date: February 14, 2012

Genres: Fiction, Historical Fiction

Hardcover: 240 pages

Publisher: St. Martin's Press

ISBN-10: 0312593309

ISBN-13: 9780312593308