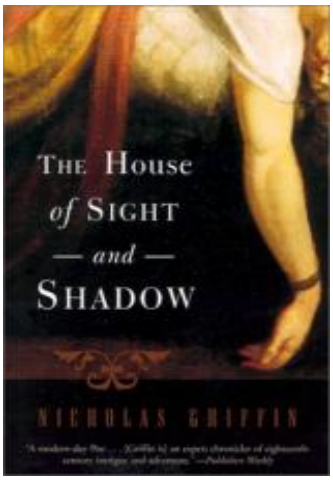
The House of Sight and Shadow

by Nicholas Griffin



About the Book

Early eighteenth-century London, and two doctors are crisscrossing the boundaries of morality in the heady pursuit of scientific progress. This challenge leads Sir Edmund Calcraft, an eminent and notorious anatomist, and Joseph Bendix, his ambitious young student, into playing a dark game with the lawless side of English society. But Bendix&'s growing passion for a woman he first glimpses in Calcraft&'s house threatens to end their mutual quest.

From gallows to madhouses, from anatomical laboratories to a Frost Fair set on the frozen Thames, the two men compete in both head and heart. Mixing history, medical lore, and myth, **The House of Sight and Shadow** is a compelling tale about ambition, deception, and the fallibility of both love and reason.

Discussion Guide

1. The House of Sight and Shadow is set in the eighteenth century. What do you think makes this book appeal to a modern audience?

2. Griffin's research for **The House of Sight and Shadow** involved him actually spending time in mortuaries and medical schools for observation. Do you think that an author can get away with writing a realistic historical novel without doing this kind of on-the-scene research? How much research do you think is necessary for authors to complete before writing a work based on fact?

3. The House of Sight and Shadow is populated both by fictional and actual characters. Do you think this weakens or strengthens the sense of place?

4. Is it easier to believe in the life of an entirely fictional character, or one familiar from history?

5. Is blindness the central metaphor of the novel? We know who seems blindest by the end, but who do you think is the most clear-sighted of the characters? Which character understands London the best within the book?

6. The novel discusses the ?insights? into science at the beginning of the eighteenth century. To our eyes they seem barbaric. Do you think there will be medical procedures that we endure today that will seem similarly archaic in a hundred years?

7. How justifiable are the crimes that the characters commit? Wild's coordination of the underworld was ruthless, but did it bring order? The thieving of bodies was illegal, but did it drive knowledge forward? Sheppard's robberies were petty, but did they deserve such punishment? These were the laws of London. But what other laws are the characters concerned with? Do morals or ethics have a role within the novel?

8. How does the characters' concern, or lack of concern with the laws of London, affect their fate?

9. The novel sets up the opposing beliefs of the two doctors. Calcraft, a product of his day, a perfectionist and an empiricist. Bendix's beliefs are vaguer, as he searches to define the link between the body and its relationship to the mind. Science subsequently followed the path that Calcraft trod. What do you think would have happened had science swung towards Bendix's beliefs? Traditional science and alternative medicine are only now beginning to merge. Could this have happened earlier?

Author Bio

Nicholas Griffin grew up in England and New York and wrote his first novel,**The Requiem Shark**, after genealogical research turned up a pirate in his family tree. He is at work on a third novel, also set in the eighteenth century, about a group of troublesome young Englishmen on a grand tour of Italy.

Critical Praise

"A modern-day Poe . . . Griffin, who's fast carving out a niche as an expert chronicler of eighteenth-century intrigue and adventure, [is] a writer to watch. "

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