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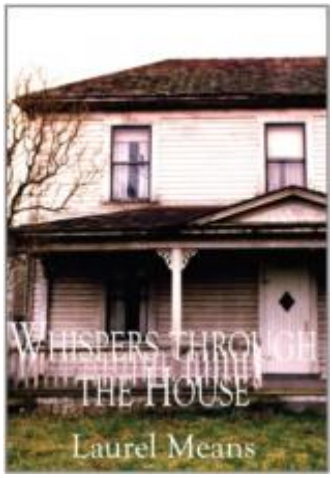
Whispers Through the House

by Laurel Means



About the Book

A sequel to **The Long Journey Home**, which introduced Henry and Agnes Morton in their quest for survival in the post-civil war prairies of middle America, The Joanna Catherine Scott award winning Whispers Through the House follows events eight years later, 1875. In this novel, Agnes sister, Lucette, must find her own way as Lucy Dubois, a recent widow with four young children. Dependency upon Noel Dubois, her brother-in-law,who offers her refuge in an old farm house which "whispers" its past memories, becomes increasingly difficult. She is forced to make choices separating her from the homestead so long a vital part of her life and from the one man she could love. A shocking surprise turns her life around toward a most unusual career for a woman in the 1870s.

Discussion Guide

1. Why is the book?s title significant? What ?whispers? does Lucy seem to hear throughout the DeLaurier House?

2. What emotions are going through Lucy?s mind as she stands at her husband?s grave at the beginning of Chapter 1?

3. An important moment occurs during that event which is to change Lucy?s life. What is it?

4. How does Lucy?s character contrast with her sister Agnes?

5. What is Lucy?s attitude toward her brother-in-law, Philip Dubois? His toward her?

6. Of the six main women characters in the story --- Lucy, Mary, Agnes, Maggie, Jane, and Patsy --- which one is your favorite and why?

7. What?s wrong with Mattias? What prevents him from declaring his feelings toward Lucy? Hers toward him?

8. If you read the first novel, **The Long Journey Home**, did your feelings about its main character, Henry Morton, change after reading **Whispers**? How about Agnes?

9. Describe the reverse parallel between Agnes? story and that of her foster daughter, Jane Creighton Morton.

10. What is the critical event that determines Lucy to leave Little Sauk?

11. Do you think the author deliberately causes you to dislike several characters, for example, Homer West or Rachael Olsen?

12. Families are an important theme in this novel. Think of several examples in which family love and unity are essential, or in which lack of it causes them to break apart.

13. Life in the 1870s was harsh and challenging, yet there are moments of humor in this story, especially with regard to children. Describe one or two.

14. We often delve deeply into Lucy?s mind. She creates several symbols to shape her thoughts, one of them being the Egyptian pyramids. What others can you think of?

15. Is Lucy?s final decision regarding her future unusual career realistic? What might it involve?

Author Bio

Laurel Means, known as the ?Green Prairie Trails? writer, finds her inspiration in the stories and imagery of the Minnesota prairies and her own French-Canadian background. A former professor of writing, literature, and linguistics, her enthusiasm for writing is reflected in her skillful use of language and in-depth characters who shape her tightly woven plots. In addition to her first novel, **The Long Journey Home**, she has recently published two young adult historical novels, **Wagon Trail to Nowhere** and**Runes Beyond the Edge**, both set on the prairies, with sequels forthcoming. She has also published in the areas of drama, short fiction, and inspirational material. She lives with her extended family in Chaska, Minnesota, along with an extended animal family of three cats and two dogs.

Critical Praise

"Laurel Means offers further evidence that she is one of those rarest of historical novelists ---one who has absolute mastery over the facts and realities of an era without ever allowing those details to burden or hinder the rich tapestry of a story woven by her fully realized characters. Here we find out what became of Henry and Agnes Morton (**Long Journey Home**) through the story of Agnes? eldest sister, Lucy. We meet people with the grit and tenderness demanded by an often relentless poverty imposed by the brutal yet beautiful land from which they work to create their home. In listening to her heart as well as the voices of the fierce women whose legacies preceded her, Lucy not only survives heartbreak

and betrayals but transcends them to realize the best gift of all --- a fully realized life."

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