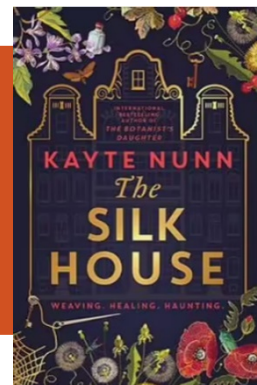




The Silk House

Kayte Nunn



Author Background

Kayte Nunn grew up in England and the USA but has lived in Australia for more than 20 years. She is a former book and magazine editor. Notably, she was the former editor of *Gourmet Traveller WINE* magazine.

Kayte is the author of four novels: *The Angel's Share*, *Rose's Vintage*, the international best-selling *The Botanist's Daughter*, *The Forgotten Letters of Esther Durrant*, and *The Last Reunion*.

Kayte is working on her next novel, a story set in Burma during the Second World War, and Ireland leading up to New Year's Eve 1999.

Kayte lives in the Northern Rivers region of New South Wales with her family.

Book Summary

The Silk House is loosely based on a house that still stands, in the town in England where Kayte Nunn grew up. It is a gothic mystery set in an eerie boarding school which shelters a centuries-old secret.

The novel unfolds over two timelines from the perspectives of three fascinating women. It begins in the present as Thea Rust reports for work at her father's alma mater, Oxleigh College. Thea, a history teacher, is to live with its first ever class of girls in the residence known as Silk House.

In 1768, Rowan Caswell is an orphan employed as a maid by the owners of Silk House, Patrick and his wife Caroline Hollander. The home is not a happy one, for the master's moods are mercurial and the mistress longs for a child.

Mary-Louise Stephenson is a spinster facing poverty with her widowed sister. She believes she can create unique silk designs that will assure her a fortune, but the male dominated industry is uninterested until Patrick offers her a commission.

Nunn weaves links between the past and present as Thea bears witness to the echoes of tragedy. Troubled by her experience of mysterious occurrences in Silk House, Thea investigates the building's history discovering its reputation for being haunted due to a series of deaths.

The Silk House leaves its mark on its inhabitants.

Discussion Questions

- ❖ What are the main themes of the book? Discuss.
- ❖ Do you think this is a 'feminist' book? What roles do the men in this story play?
- ❖ Kayte Nunn explores witchcraft, herbalism, and the role of plants in embroidery. What implications do these have for those in the Hollander household?
- ❖ Unexplained events occur in the Silk House: objects are moved around, the sound of a pianoforte can be heard playing at night, and mounds of dirt consistently appear on the floor for no apparent reason. Do you believe in spirits? Have you had experiences such as these that cannot be explained? Discuss.
- ❖ What feelings did this book evoke for you?
- ❖ Did you like the way the book moved back and forth between the 1760s and 2019? How does this technique add to / detract from the story?
- ❖ Are there any questions raised in the book left unanswered? If so, what are they and what do you think the answers might be?
- ❖ There is an unexpected twist in the plot in the final pages. Did you see it coming? Discuss.
- ❖ If you had the chance to ask the author of this book one question, what would it be?

References

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