

# The House at Riverton

By Kate Morton

## Reading Group Guide

1. Do you think of *The House at Riverton* as a tragic novel? How are the characters' tragic outcomes caused by the incompatibility of what they want and who they are?
2. How important to the novel's outcome is Grace's longing for a sister? When Grace finds out about her true parentage, why does she choose not to tell Hannah? Is it the right decision? Would things have ended differently had she done otherwise?
3. Kate Morton has said that the novel's setting is as important to her as its characters, that Riverton Manor is as much a character of the book as its inhabitants. Do you agree? Does Riverton mirror the fates of the Hartford family and the aristocracy in general? If so, in what ways?
4. The First World War was a catalyst for enormous social and cultural change. Not a character in *The House at Riverton* is left untouched by this. Whose life is most altered? Why?
5. Is there a heroine in *The House at Riverton*? If so, who is it and why?
6. Grace and Robbie are both illegitimate children of upper-class parents; however, their lives and opportunities are vastly different. Why?
7. Duty is very important to the youthful Grace. Did Grace's sense of duty contribute to the novel's conclusion? If so, how? Would things have turned out better for the characters if Grace had made different decisions?
8. One of the main themes of *The House at Riverton* is the haunting of the present by the past. In what ways does the novel suggest that the past can never be escaped? Do you agree that our pasts are inescapable?
9. Grace has resisted ever telling anyone about the events at Riverton. Why? What makes her change her mind? Is Grace a reliable narrator? Given her motive for recording her memories, can we trust her?
10. The twentieth century was a period of great and accelerated social change. In particular, the historical years that make up the bulk of Grace's memories comprised a time of enormous transition. In what ways does Grace's life exemplify these social changes?
11. Despite their differences, how might Grace and Hannah be seen as "doubles"? How does Grace's relationship with Alfred mirror Hannah's relationship with Robbie?
12. Another theme in *The House at Riverton* is that of inheritance -- the way we are bound to our families through various items that are passed between the generations. Along with material inheritances, we are also subject to physical, social and psychological legacies. These inheritances are important in making us who we are, and are not easily escaped. In what way is this notion explored in *The House at Riverton*? How do these various types of inheritance influence the lives of Hannah, Frederick, Teddy, Robbie, Grace, Jemima and Simion?