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The Light Between Oceans: A Novel



Synopsis

A captivating, beautiful, and stunningly accomplished debut novel - the story of a lighthouse keeper and his wife who make one devastating choice that forever changes two worlds. In 1918, after four harrowing years on the Western Front, Tom Sherbourne returns to Australia to take a job as the lighthouse keeper on remote Janus Rock. To this isolated island, where the supply boat comes only four times a year and shore leaves are granted every other year at best, Tom brings a young, bold, and loving wife, Isabel. Three years later, after two miscarriages and one stillbirth, the grieving Isabel is tending the grave of her newly lost infant when she hears a baby's cries on the wind. A boat has washed up on shore carrying a dead man and a living baby. Tom, whose records as a lighthouse keeper are meticulous and whose moral principles have withstood a horrific war, wants to report the dead man and the infant immediately. But Isabel has taken the tiny baby to her breast. Against Tom's judgment, they claim the child as their own and name her Lucy, but a rift begins to grow between them. When Lucy is two, Tom and Isabel return to the mainland and are reminded that there are other people in the world...and one of them is desperate to find her lost baby. M.L. Stedman's extraordinarily compelling characters, still trying to make sense of life in the wake of so much death in the war, are imperfect people seeking to find their north star in a world of incomprehensible complexity.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This review was written for LibraryThing Early Reviewers. "The Light Between Oceans" is not an

easy book to review....the story is unique and one wouldn't want to give away any part of the plot line. M.L. Stedman was born and raised in Western Australia, her descriptions of the coast of Australia are beautifully rendered. The beginning of the book takes place on an island off of the coast of mainland Australia. Stedman does an excellent job of setting us in a remote spot. She also draws her characters so well that one finds themselves thinking of them between readings. They and their problems become real...one wants to advise them as to what to do, or warn them of things they shouldn't. This book is engrossing and with its many plot twists and turns it is always entertaining...doesn't bog down or become predictable. Some of the passages are so profound that I found myself rereading them..... As stated by other reviewers, this is not a "happy" story. But it is a true to life story. The characters are flawed in ways that we all could possibly beM. L. Stedman...knows how to render time and place, people and situations with great skill. This is a first novel and I would not hesitate to read the next by this author....simply because I thought this was an excellent effort....we will be reading this for one of my reading groups. I have also recommended it to many of my fellow readers already. I know they will not be disappointed.Part geography lesson, part historical novel, a bit of a mystery and above all a story of love...love of all types this book has been a joy to read. Greatful for the chance to do so. I am a fan. Read this story.....it is so well crafted, it will not disappoint.

Western Australia is beautifully depicted in this engrossing story about Tom Sherborne, a man who survives WWI but chooses a lonely existence as a lighthouse keeper to help keep the memories of the war and those who perished at bay. He unexpectedly meets a young woman, Izzy, who captures his heart and convinces him that he deserves a chance to have a family of his own. They begin their marriage happily as the sole inhabitants on Janus Rock where Tom tends the lighthouse. Several years go by and Izzy becomes despondent after two miscarriages and a stillbirth. She finds it nothing short of a miracle when a boat washes up on shore with a baby and a dead man. She convinces Tom that this is fate and not to report it to the authorities; they keep the child and raise her as their own although Tom is always plagued with doubts about whether they did the right thing. These doubts come to a head after several trips back to the mainland where they discover that the baby-now a toddler- is not an orphan after all. ***Spoiler alert*** shifting loyalties and incredibly painful decisions drive the last third of the book. This author does not pull punches and the heart-wrenching grief faced by all involved is explored from every angle.

The Light Between Oceans by M.L. Stedman is a heartbreaking story in which no one comes out

the winner. It is a story of choices and consequences. The book is told in three parts. The story opens on April 27, 1926, when Tom Sherbourne, the lighthouse keeper on Janus Rock, makes a horrifying discovery. A boat has washed ashore with a dead body and a crying infant. Tom Sherbourne is a World War I vet, a decorated hero who would rather forget the events that occurred in Europe. He makes his way to Point Partageuse where he has signed on as the lighthouse keeper on Janus Rock. There in town, he meets Isabel "Izzy" Graysmark. They marry and begin a life on the rock. Life quickly becomes harsh when Izzy suffers two miscarriages and delivers a stillborn son. The next day, Tom makes his discovery. Izzy desperate for a child, begs Tom not to record the event in the lighthouse log book and they would raise the child as their own. Seeing how happy she is and against his better judgment he agrees. They present the child as their own. Together they live as a family for two years when they return to town on their annual leave. There they learn the identity of the man who died and the events that led him into the boat. They also discover that the baby's mother is still alive. Hannah Roennfeldt is a desperate woman who spends her days wandering around the shore, searching for her husband and daughter who disappeared on ANZAC Day. Tom wants to confess what has been done but Izzy believes it's too late. After four years, their secret is out. The questions start. Who is right? Who takes the blame? Who is this child's mother? This book was recommended to me by my Aunt Sharon. I was curious about this story. A story that reminded me of the King Solomon story from the Bible where two women fight over a surviving child. As a woman who had lost two babies, I understand Izzy's desperation and thinking that the baby's arrival at the lighthouse was a gift from God. On the other hand, as a mother of a daughter, I understand Hannah's desperation, the fight to keep her only child and the desire to punish the people who took her from her. In this story, there are no clear winners, no clear happy ending. No matter the choice, one woman will be hurt and the course of a child's life is altered forever. I highly recommend this book. It is a great story in an amazing backdrop, the western coast of Australia. My only complaint is that the author never explain what ANZAC day was. It is mentioned several times in the story that I had to look it up. ANZAC Day is a day of remembrance in Australia and New Zealand that commemorates its citizens who served and died in all wars, conflicts and peacekeeping operations observed on April 25. It was originally organized as a day to honor the members of the Australia and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) who fought at Gallipoli in World War I.

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