

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

*The Secret Keeper*  
by Kate Morton

BOOK GROUP

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## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

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Kate Morton grew up in the mountains of southeast Queensland and lives now with her husband and young sons in Brisbane. She has degrees in dramatic art and English literature, specializing in nineteenth-century tragedy and contemporary gothic novels. With just three novels published, Kate Morton has sold more than 7 million copies in twenty-six languages, across thirty-eight countries. *The Shifting Fog*, published internationally as *The House at Riverton*, *The Forgotten Garden*, and *The Distant Hours* have all been #1 bestsellers around the world. Each novel won the Australian Book Industry award for General Fiction Book of the Year. You can find more information about Kate Morton and her books at [KateMorton.com](http://KateMorton.com) or [facebook.com/KateMortonAuthor](https://facebook.com/KateMortonAuthor)

## BOOK SUMMARY

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From the New York Times and #1 internationally bestselling author of *The Distant Hours*, *The Forgotten Garden*, and *The House at Riverton*, a spellbinding novel of family secrets, murder, and enduring love. During a picnic at her family's farm in the English countryside, sixteen-year-old Laurel Nicolson witnesses a shocking crime, a crime that challenges everything she knows about her adored mother, Dorothy. Now, fifty years later, Laurel and her sisters are meeting at the farm to celebrate Dorothy's ninetieth birthday. Realizing that this is her last chance to discover the truth about that long-ago day, Laurel searches for answers that can only be found in Dorothy's past. Clue by clue, she traces a secret history of three strangers from vastly different worlds thrown together in war-torn London—Dorothy, Vivien, and Jimmy—whose lives are forever after entwined. A gripping story of deception and passion, *The Secret Keeper* will keep you enthralled to the last page.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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1. Each of Kate Morton's four novels are securely anchored in their strong sense of time and place. In *The Secret Keeper*, World War II is a rich and realistic environment—close enough for memory but a long way from our twenty-first century lives—which allows the author to show both the frailty and courage of human nature. Discuss.
2. The rusted-on loyalties of family members to each other are key in this novel. Do you think Dolly's feelings of unease about her own family contribute to her love of playing make-believe?
3. Laurel had never thought to ask her mother about her life before Dorothy met Stephen Nicolson. And it's impossible for Dolly to imagine Lady Caldicott being young and beautiful wearing those glorious dresses now going musty in the dressing room. And Jimmy's dad loves to tell his stories of the past. How is aging portrayed in *The Secret Keeper*?
4. Many readers have commented on how extremely likeable Jimmy is—how has Kate Morton developed his character to make him so?

5. Do you think that *The Secret Keeper's* characters live the lives they deserve? Were you satisfied and surprised at their various outcomes and their influences on each other?
6. Once you understood Dorothy's reasons for committing that violent action at the end of chapter one, did you find any moral ambiguity in her behaviour? Did she really have a choice?
7. Everyone has their secrets. *The Secret Keeper*, some more than others! Do you think Laurel is justified in upturning her mother's carefully laid secrets? When is keeping a secret within a family justified?

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