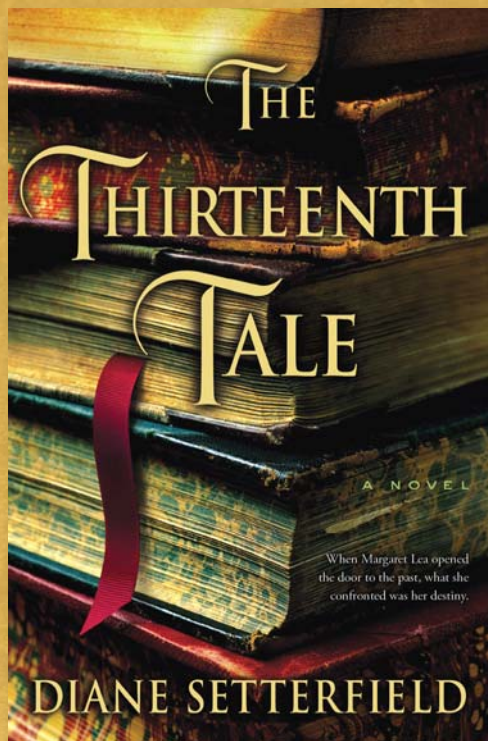




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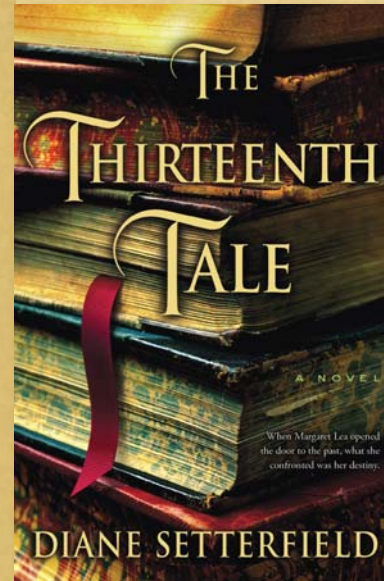


Unputdownable.

This word is not in every dictionary, but it is one that booksellers often use. Nothing gives us more pleasure than recommending books that we have read and loved, and finding unputdownable books gives us the greatest pleasure of all. ♦ The number of books that are hand-sold in our stores is staggering: every day, our booksellers lead readers to hundreds of books—new and old—across every category and topic imaginable. Even more staggering is the number of new titles being published. From among these we often find works of exceptional merit that go on to become both popular and critically acclaimed. ♦ Barnes & Noble Recommends provides us with the opportunity to share such books with you. From the thousands of titles published each season we will select one book we love. Each selection will be a book that we know is a riveting read and a work of extraordinary quality worthy of stimulating discussion. Each Barnes & Noble Recommends selection will be chosen by a group of our discriminating and independent-minded booksellers from across the country. Each selection will be a book we are sure you will recommend to another reader. ♦ Best of all, each Barnes & Noble Recommends selection will be a book that we believe you won't be able to put down.

Our inaugural selection is Diane Setterfield's *The Thirteenth Tale*.

A novel of ghostly legacies, descended from *Jane Eyre*.



Diane Setterfield's remarkable first novel begins like a reader's dream: a bookseller's daughter returns to the shop one night to discover a letter from England's best-loved writer, a woman whose life is shrouded in rumor and legend. Reading the strange missive from the famous Vida Winter, Margaret Lea is puzzled by its invitation to discover the truth about the author's mystifying past. Later that evening, unable to sleep, Margaret returns to the shop from her bedroom upstairs in search of something to read. Passing over her old favorites—*The Woman in White*,

Wuthering Heights, *Jane Eyre*—she can't resist the temptation of the rarest of her correspondent's books, *Thirteen Tales of Change and Desperation*, the recalled first edition of a book that contained only twelve stories. Falling under Vida Winter's spell for the first time, Margaret reads it straight through. Not long afterward she is standing in the opulent library of Miss Winter's Yorkshire home, transported by the romance of books into a mysterious tale of her own.



Only five short chapters into Setterfield's deft, enthralling narrative, her readers too have been transported: they've inhaled the dusty scent of Lea's Antiquarian Bookshop, shared the sense of adventurous comfort Margaret absorbs from her late-night reading, and been seduced by the glamorous enigma of Vida Winter. Yet *The Thirteenth Tale* has just begun. Commissioned by Miss Winter to compose her unvarnished biography, Margaret is soon swept up in the tragic history she must unravel—a story stranger and more haunting than any the celebrated author has ever penned, encompassing a grand house, a beautiful yet doomed family, passion, madness, ghosts, and a secret that holds readers spellbound until the very end. Richly atmospheric and deeply satisfying, Setterfield's debut revives in all their glory the traditions of gothic and romantic suspense exemplified by the works of Wilkie Collins, the Brontës, and Daphne du Maurier. Old-fashioned in the best sense, it's an urgently readable novel that's nearly impossible to put down.

"What succor, what consolation is there in truth, compared to a story? What good is truth, at midnight, in the dark, when the wind is roaring like a bear in the chimney? When the lightning strikes shadows on the bedroom wall and the rain taps at the window with its long fingernails? No. When fear and cold make a statue of you in your bed, don't expect hard-boned and fleshless truth to come running to your aid. What you need are the plump comforts of a story."

From Vida Winter's letter to Margaret Lea in *The Thirteenth Tale*.



About the Author



The Thirteenth Tale is Diane Setterfield's first novel. ✧ Born in Berkshire, England, she was educated at Theale Green Comprehensive School and Bristol University.

A former academic, she has taught at various universities in England and in France, specializing in 20th-century French literature, especially the works of André Gide. She

has also run her own business teaching French to people intending to move across the Channel. ✧ *The Thirteenth Tale* was in part inspired by Setterfield's wish to return to the storytelling richness of the books she treasured in her youth. "I read French literature almost exclusively for more than a decade," she explains, "so when I left academia, I really wanted to go back to the English classics which I loved so much as a teenager. It was very nostalgic for me to write in that sort of style." As she worked on *The Thirteenth Tale*, Setterfield's talent was spotted by the novelist

Jim Grace during a writing course she had enrolled in to advance the prospects of publication. ✧ In her early forties, Diane Setterfield is married and lives in Harrogate, North Yorkshire.



Get the most out of *The Thirteenth Tale* with these reading group discussion questions.

1. When do you think *The Thirteenth Tale* takes place? The narrator gives some hints, but never tells the exact date. Which aspects of the book gave you a sense of time, and which seemed timeless? Did the question of time affect your experience with the novel?
2. Books play a major role in this novel. Margaret, for example, sells books for a living. Miss Winter writes them. Most of the important action of the story takes place in libraries. There are stories within stories, all inextricably intertwined. Discuss the various roles of books, stories, and writing in this novel.
3. Miss Winter asks Margaret if she'd like to hear a ghost story – in fact, there seem to be several ghost stories weaving their way through. In what ways is *The Thirteenth Tale* a classic, Gothic novel?
4. Compare and contrast Margaret, Miss Winter, and Aurelius – the three “ghosts” of the novel who are also each haunted by their pasts.
5. It is a classic writer's axiom that a symbol must appear at least three times in a story so that the reader knows that you meant it as a symbol. In *The Thirteenth Tale*, the novel *Jane Eyre* appears several times. Discuss the appearances and allusions to *Jane Eyre* and how this novel echoes that one.
6. Dr. Clifton tells Margaret that she is “suffering from an ailment that afflicts ladies of romantic imagination” when he learns that she is an avid reader of novels such as *Wuthering Heights*, *Jane Eyre*, and *Sense and Sensibility*. What do you think he means by drawing such a parallel? What other parallels exist between *The Thirteenth Tale* and classic 19th-century literature?
7. When did you first suspect Miss Winter's true identity? Whether you knew or not, looking back, what clues does she give to Margaret (and what clues does the author give to you)?
8. The title of this novel is taken from the title of Miss Winter's first book, *Thirteen Tales of Change and Desperation*, a collection of twelve stories with a mysterious thirteenth left out at the last minute before publication. How is this symbolic of the novel? What is the thirteenth tale?

Further Reading: Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*
Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*
Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*
Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca*

Praise for *The Thirteenth Tale*

FROM OUR BOOKSELLERS

“It's not often that I would even dare to compare a book to *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*, but *The Thirteenth Tale* is one that I will. This book is absolutely wonderful. It's a classic Gothic tale, with ghosts and a grand house, good and evil and a secret that will have you guessing until the very end.” *Sessalee Hensley, Barnes & Noble Fiction Buyer*

“In about five pages—I was hooked! I could not put the book down! Neglecting everything from the dishes to sleep I finished the book in two short nights and have been thinking about it ever since” *Jessica Flowers, Barnes & Noble, Bloomington, IL*

“WOW! When I was down to the final few chapters, I almost didn't want to go to work so I could finish! And I LOVE my work, so that should tell you how great I thought the book was.” *Teresa Patek, Barnes & Noble, Crystal Lake, IL*

FROM WRITERS & REVIEWERS

“Setterfield's sensible heroine is, like *Jane Eyre*, full of repressed feeling—and is unprepared for both heartaches and romance. And like Jane, she's a real reader and makes a terrific narrator.” *Publishers Weekly*

“Anyone picking up this novel will not be able to put it down. Pick it up.”
Elizabeth Jane Howard, author of the Cazalet Chronicle

“Simply brilliant - I haven't enjoyed a first novel so much for absolutely ages.”
Kate Mosse, author of Labyrinth

“This thoroughly absorbing and strangely other-worldly novel captivates the reader from the very first page.” *Robert Goddard, author of Into the Blue*

“Setterfield has crafted an homage to the romantic heroines of du Maurier, Collins and the Brontës.... Setterfield's debut is enchanting Goth for the 21st century.”
Kirkus Reviews (starred review)

“A ruined mansion in the English countryside, secret illegitimate children, a mad-woman hidden in the attic, ghostly twin sisters—yep, it's a gothic novel, and it doesn't pretend to be anything fancier. But this one grabs the reader with its damp, icy fingers and doesn't let go until the last shocking secret has been revealed.” *Library Journal*



BARNES & NOBLE RECOMMENDS

Share the Experience

·{ The Thirteenth Tale }·

List Price: \$26.00 | B&N Price: \$18.20 | Member Price: \$16.38

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Look for the announcement of reading group discussions in select stores around the country at www.bn.com/recommends.

·{ at Barnes & Noble.com }·

Meet Diane Setterfield in our exclusive online reading group. Log on to www.bn.com/bookclubs throughout November.

·{ Start Your Own Reading Group }·

Ask a bookseller for our free guide, or visit www.bn.com/recommends.

·{ Meet Diane Setterfield }·

at these Barnes & Noble appearances:

- Thursday, October 5th, 7:00 pm, New York, NY
- Monday, October 16th, 7:30 pm, Austin, TX
- Tuesday, October 17th, 7:30 pm, Edina, MN
- Wednesday, October 18th, 7:00 pm, Cedar Rapids, IA

