

LoveReading Reader reviews of The Lost Garden by Katharine Swartz

Below are the complete reviews, written by LoveReading members.

Vanessa Wild

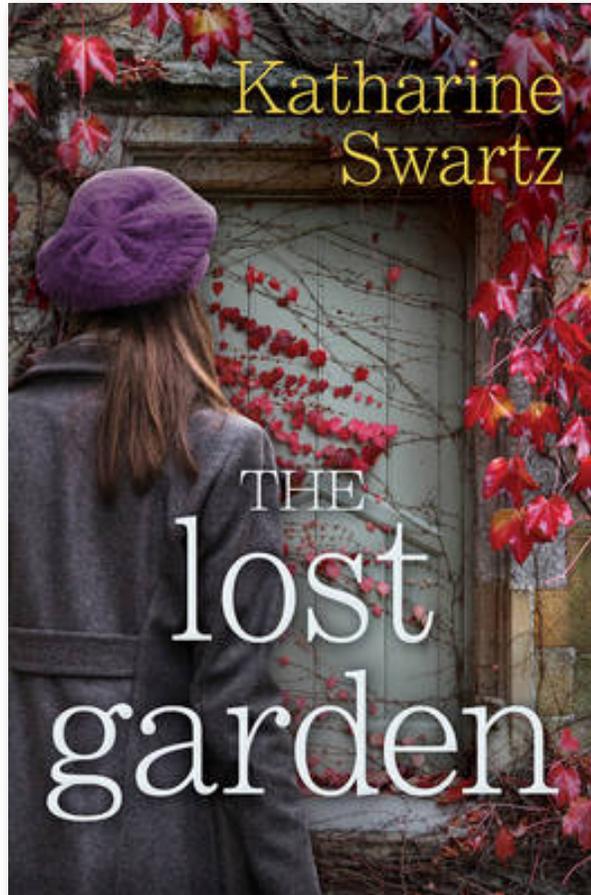
A gentle, touching, engaging and delightful read about grief, forgiveness and hope.

An evocative dual timeframe novel set in the Lake District. In the present day Marin Ellis becomes guardian to her half-sister, Rebecca, when their father and his wife are killed in a car crash. They leave Hampshire to set up home in Cumbria as a fresh start. In 1919 the vicar's daughter, Eleanor Sanderson, is heartbroken over the death of her brother during the Great War. The restoration of a walled garden is the link which connects the two stories together.

This is a gentle tale about grief, secrets, forgiveness and hope. It is well written and depicts life just after World War I effectively. I equally enjoyed both narratives. The characters are believable and realistically painted - the sorrow and misery of losing a loved one is deftly and sensitively explored and observed. It did bring back memories of reading Frances Hodgson Burnett's 'The Secret Garden', a childhood favourite of mine!

I thoroughly enjoyed 'The Lost Garden' and found it a touching, engaging and delightful read. It is my first foray into Katharine Swartz' work and it won't be my last.

Many thanks to LoveReading.co.uk for giving me the opportunity to read and



review this book.

You can follow Vanessa on Twitter: @Butterflybiblio

Christine Scott

Fantastic book of past and present.

This book gives a fantastic tale of past and present. Life in the early 1900's was very different from now and this book tells how class dictated who young girls were allowed to fall in love with.

An intriguing story of how a young girl defies her family to end up with the man she loves even though he has a chequered past, and how a woman and her sister, many years later, buy a cottage in the grounds of the house she lived in and discover the secret garden and delve into the archives to find out the history of this property and the people who lived there before them.

A story that gets you really involved and you don't want to put this book down. Gripping tale that really holds your imagination right to the end.

Jennifer Stewart

The Cumbrian coast is the setting for this gentle, heart-warming tale of interwoven past and present love stories. An undemanding read with likeable characters that draw you in and make you want to keep reading. If you like Rachel Hore, you'd enjoy reading this.

The Cumbrian coast is the setting for this gentle, heart-warming tale of interwoven past and present love stories. Present day sees half-sisters Marin and Rebecca, still reeling from the death of their father and his wife, relocating to the small Cumbrian village of Goswell, drawn by Bower House and its intriguing history. Mirroring their story is the wartime story of Eleanor, daughter of the vicar of Goswell who is coming to terms with the death of her brother Walter at the end of World War One.

Both Marin and Eleanor find peace and experience the blossoming of new love when they begin to work on the almost hidden walled garden of Bower House.

Although separated by a century the stories of Marin and Eleanor are very similar and the two women are brought together through time by their love of the garden and their love of the men that they meet through that garden.

Nicola Briggs

'The Lost Garden' is an evocative novel alternating between the present day and post-WW1. It's an engaging and easy read, perfect for summer holidays or rainy days.

'The Lost Garden' is an evocative novel alternating between the present day and post-WW1. It is set in the Lake District and the restoration of a walled garden links the two strands together.

It's a story about grief, forgiveness and hope. I enjoyed both strands equally and felt the characters were well drawn and believable. I particularly enjoyed the somewhat difficult relationship between Marin and her half-sister Rebecca in the modern day strand.

It's an engaging and easy read, perfect for summer holidays or rainy days. I note that The Lost Garden is number two in the 'Tales from Goswell' series and although it reads perfectly well as a standalone novel, 'The Vicar's Wife' is now on my to-read-list.

Edel Waugh - www.edelwaugh.blogspot.com

This beautiful story is told in the past in 1919 and in the present. This is the story about a woman called Marin who comes home from abroad to take care of her half sister Rebecca after their father dies suddenly. Needing a fresh start they move away to a quiet town and rent a place there to see if they like it. Fly back in time to 1919 and we see the past residents of the house and the staff from that time and we see that both people who have lived there have a lot in common with each other.

*This place is a place of healing, solace and survival despite hardships that befell those in the past and present, the secret garden that helped heal a sisters broken heart in 1919 could help Marin and Rebecca now. **A beautiful story for those who like stories that flit back and forth in time showing us that despite modern day being so different in many ways emotions and love never change at all** no matter how much time passes.*

Pauline Braisher – www.ilovebooksandcats.wordpress.com

Small book, big story!

This is a small book and I assumed it would be a lightweight story. However I was very wrong. It's an intriguing tale of two love stories a century apart,

linked together by a garden in a small Cumbrian town. It's a story of loss and recovery from that loss and it's a story of women who are strong enough to overcome the odds to achieve happiness. I really cared what happened to the characters in this book and how the story ended. **This is one of the most enjoyable books I have ever read and I would highly recommend it.**

Nicola Crisp

'The Lost Garden' tells two parallel stories about women dealing with grief and finding solace through restoring a walled garden, as well as the potential for love.

*Eleanor is grief-stricken when she learns that her brother was killed just before the end of the war. She just wants everything back to normal now that the war is over and she can't understand why the soldiers who return apparently healthy are not happy, especially her sister's fiancé. You can really empathise with her confusion and frustration at the continuing general despondency, and the soldiers' refusal to talk about their experiences. The dramatic prologue leaves out vital information that keeps you hanging to the end of the book. In parallel, Marin has never been good at relationships since her mother died when she was a child and her father pushed her away. Now she is guardian to her unknown teenage half-sister when her father and his wife are killed. All parents of teenagers will sympathise with her struggle to bridge the void between them. In both stories there is a gardener, but both are hiding secrets. **I loved the way that the two stories unfolded together** - not the same, but with many similarities - **and you are kept guessing through most of the book about how the stories will be resolved**, even as Marin learns more about Eleanor's garden. The descriptions of the wind-swept Goswell are suitably evocative of the despair the characters feel. And the wonderful descriptions of the finished gardens almost make me rush out to do some gardening. A great book to read, especially on warm summer days outside in the garden.*

Margaret Freeman - www.booksplease.org

An emotionally intense, yet gentle story, of love, loss and grief, set in both the past and the present.

'The Lost Garden' is an emotionally intense novel of love, loss and grief, set in both the past and the present day, in a small village on the Cumbrian coast.

In 1919 Eleanor, the daughter of the vicar of Goswell, is struggling to adjust to the loss of her brother, Walter who died just before the Armistice was declared and in the present day half-sisters Marin and Rebecca are coming to terms with the death of their father and his wife.

The link between the two stories centres around the walled garden at the back of the Bower House, a small house next to the church. It was said to have been the herb garden for the monastery before the Reformation.

It is a gentle story, well told and an enjoyable read, switching between the past and the present. The differences in attitudes and social conventions of the times provide a distinct contrast and highlights the parallels between the two stories. I liked the story-lines for both Marin and Eleanor, both have difficult relationships with their sisters and both are coming to terms with their grief, but on the whole I was more interested in Eleanor's story, set against the backdrop of the post First World War.

Christine Schollar

Amazing, unputdownable. I absolutely loved this book. One of the best novels I have read in a long time.

It tells the story of Marin who after the death of her father and his second wife in a car accident is made guardian to 15 year old half sister Rebecca.

They move to Bower House on the edge of the village church property in Goswell on the coast of Cumbria.

Mirrored alongside this tale is the story of Eleanor Sanderson and her family who are grieving over the loss of her beloved brother.

The two stories are set in different time eras. Marin's story is set in present day, whereas the story of Eleanor starts in 1919.

The story changes eras chapter by chapter starting with Marin. I found this different to anything I have read but once I got used to the changes I really enjoyed the style.

Although it was an easy read I really cared about the characters and what happened to them.

I stayed up until the early hours keen to know what happened next.

I have not read any other books by Katharine Swartz although this book states it's the second book in her new series, 'Tales from Goswell'. I didn't matter that I had not read the first book.

I would thoroughly recommend this book.

Jane Pepler

Fans of Kate Morton and Rachel Hore will appreciate this book.

I always enjoy a book set in two different times and this was no exception. Marin Ellis is made guardian of her fifteen year old half sister Rebecca when her father and his wife are killed in a car crash. Marin uproots herself from her life in Boston to relocate to the village of Goswell on the Cumbrian coast with Rebecca to make a fresh start at Bower House.

Eleanor Sanderson is grieving the loss of her beloved brother Walter at the end of the First World War. As Spring arrives she sets to making a garden of remembrance for him.

Marin discovers the lost garden behind a rusting door and sets out to find out it's secrets.

*I found the story of Eleanor far more interesting than the story set in the current day. **I really enjoyed the book and found it a compulsive read.** It is reminiscent of the works of Kate Morton and Rachel Hore. **I am delighted to have discovered this writer and look forward to reading her other books.***

Sharon Goodwin - www.jerasjamboree.co.uk twitter address @shazjera

A gently paced read that draws you in and makes you care about the characters.

Relatable and likeable characters, Eleanor and Marin (separated by almost a decade), take the reader through loss, grief, acceptance and the healing power of love in this gently paced interwoven story set in Cumbrian village Goswell.

Both are trying to find a place to belong – Eleanor in a world that has changed as a result of the First World War and Marin in the present time coming to terms with familial rejection that is still shaping her life.

Despite the different societal expectations in the dual timelines, Jack and Joss both hide secrets that alienate them and both have to come to terms with this before a chance at moving forward.

With an emotional ending that is full of hope, 'The Lost Garden' leaves the reader with the feeling that no matter the darkness you might be feeling, letting

others in will help you believe and trust in the world once again.

Janet Gilliard

I was a bit dubious about this as it is published by Lion who publish religious titles. I am glad to say I was wrong.

It is the story of Marin who is made guardian of her barely known half sister and a hidden garden. The story is also that of Eleanor in 1919 and her unsuitable friendship with the gardener who creates the garden.

This is a gentle story which I enjoyed very much.

Christine Waddington

*This book is the second in the 'Goswell' series by Katharine Swartz. The books can be read alone but there was an added dimension having already read the first book in the series. Characters mentioned in the first book appear as old friends and the scene is set in the Cumbrian village of Goswell. Two stories run side by side in this book - the first goes back to the First World War and tells the story of Eleanor and her family in the Vicarage. The setting is very atmospheric and true to the period and gradually we learn about the garden's creation and the reasons behind it. The second thread is set in the present day and tells of two sisters united by a common tragedy who come to Goswell for a new start. Gradually they piece together Eleanor's story, gradually gaining insights into their own relationship at the same time. The garden draws the past and present together very skilfully and I enjoyed it very much. **The two stories unfold with surprises along the way and you feel very much drawn into the lives of all the characters and really care what happens to them.** I can't wait for the third book!*

Lisa Redmond

Katherine Swartz has written a beautiful story of love, grief and healing. This is a dual time story set in the present day and in the years after the Great War. Marin Ellis buys the Bower House on impulse, with its abandoned walled garden, creaky pipes and rattling windows the old house on the Cumbrian coast offers a new start and a challenge. Marin's estranged father and her step mother have been killed in a car crash and Marin is now sole guardian to Rebecca, a fifteen year old half-sister she barely knows. Determined to help her

sister heal, Marin asks the help of local gardener Joss Fowler to restore the walled garden and as the work begins Marin uncovers the story behind the garden's creators; the vicar's daughter and the returning soldier who had designed the garden as a memorial for the Great War dead. **A beautifully written story of grief, love, duty and redemption, perfect for fans of Kate Morton and Rachel Hore.**

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Kath Martin

I found this a book quite moving at times. It is a gentle story of bereavement and grief (which all sounds really depressing) **but it is told with a surprisingly light touch.** The garden really, for me, did not play a big enough part although it did provide a link between the two main characters, separated by time, yet facing the same feelings of loss. I would have liked there to have been a feeling of 'restoration' in the garden, rather than going in with a strimmer and clearing away everything. I was left feeling unsure if there was the intention by Katharine Swartz to convey some symbolism and perhaps I need to re-read it to work this out. I particularly liked the way the author portrays the relationships between the characters, especially Eleanor's 'unsuitable' relationship with the gardener. I was intrigued by the 'structure' in the middle of the garden. An excellent way of keeping me reading. I was slightly disappointed that there was really nothing left of the old garden to link it to the present day."

Rebecca Cockeram

I found this book a struggle. It seemed a bit to slow for me, and I couldn't warm to the characters.

A tale of two women dealing with loss, separated by 100 years. Both find that caring for a garden helps to pull them through and work through their grief.

It centres on two stories separated by over a hundred years. Both women are dealing with grief and use the garden of the title as their way to get through it.

However it takes a long time to get going, and I found myself mostly irritated and bored of the characters.

Eleanor is dealing with the loss of her brother and Marin is dealing with

parental loss and having to deal with her step sister, and she doesn't seem to know how to cope.

However I felt I really didn't care. It didn't grasp me, and I struggled to get through this book.