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your next book

## LoveReading Reader reviews of **The Expatriates** By **Janice Y. K. Lee**



**Below are the complete reviews, written by LoveReading members.**

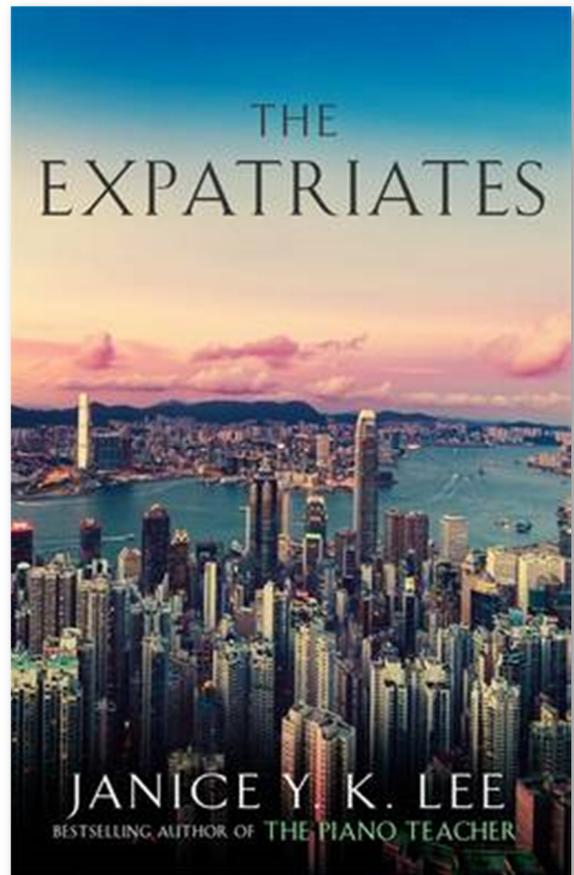
### **Judith Smith**

*A beautifully interwoven story of three very different women in present day Hong Kong describing the loss of identity if they don't fit the pattern of wife and mother in an expatriate and close knit community. A calamity is telegraphed in the early chapters which hook the reader as it, and its aftermath unfold. **A beautiful and deeply moving story that can't be put down until the last page is turned.***

### **Emma Halford**

***Brilliantly interwoven tale of the lives of three women in the expat bubble of Hong Kong.***

*This is a superbly plotted, thoroughly absorbing book. The beautifully detailed, privileged expat bubble of Hong Kong is a compelling setting for the interweaving lives of three American women. The artificially constructed, slightly surreal edge of the expat community emphasizes the strengths and vulnerabilities of the women as they cope with twists of fate, the rigours of motherhood, the disappearance of themselves from their own lives and their sudden reappearance in the lives of others. The women are vivid characters, utterly individual despite the social conventions that*



*threaten to reduce them to stereotypes. It is this that makes the book a celebration of women, their relationships and their capabilities. I loved it. Thank you Love Reading!*

You can follow Emma on twitter: @CorBlastMe

### **Edel Waugh**

*This was a unique and surprising story based primarily around three women living in Hong Kong called Mercy, Margaret and Hillary. Each woman has her own problems but they are linked to each other in more ways than one. The story was touching and relatable but the one part of the story that touched me the most was the empathy one woman showed the other when I know for certain that almost no one else would react the same way given the situation they found themselves in. **Intriguing and very enjoyable, this is a book to add to your TBR list!***

<http://edelwaugh.blogspot.ie/2016/01/the-expatriates-by-janice-y-k-lee.html?m=1>

### **Annette Woolfson**

***At last, a book to get totally immersed in! This story of how three women's lives become entangled in the constraints of ex-pat life in Hong Kong really captured my imagination from the start.** The characters are so well written and believable although the story line is every parents' worst nightmare - Margaret's pain was palpable. The streets of Hong Kong were brought alive by the author's descriptions. Will certainly look out for other novels by Janice Y. K. Lee.*

### **Sara McLaughlin**

***In this touching novel the author skilfully weaves together the stories of three women as they learn to adjust after their lives are changed unexpectedly.***

*This is a touching story of three women who find themselves in very difficult circumstances.*

*The book follows them through how they all take different approaches in adjusting to their new lives – but it's not easy or straightforward.*

*The author tells each of their stories without being overly dramatic but in a way that draws you in until eventually the stories overlap and combine.*

*At first the women appear to be very different, but as you learn about them you find that they all share a strength that helps them to deal with their situations with grace and dignity.*

*I found this a very enjoyable book and would recommend it to other women – particularly those who are also mothers.*

### **Phyllippa Smithson**

***UNIQUE! Three women who have lost a child, a marriage, a sense of self-worth and who are living the consequence.***

*Mercy is a 21 year old American-Korean, Margaret, an American mother of three young children under 10 years old and Hilliary, a childless American wife are all living expat lives in Hong Kong. Whilst their worlds collide geographically, this story is about how their emotional lives are intertwined as a result of a tragedy that links all three.*

*It is also about the expectation of women living away from their homeland. How the culture of the expat woman defines how they should be, how they should live and how they should engage with those around them.*

***Hauntingly honest reading and totally unique to anything I have ever read. It forces the reader to consider the consequences not of the victim but those left behind.***

***Loved it.***

### **Mollie Mayson-Simpson**

***This book fascinated me at first sight***, consequently a word first about the structure: the book is divided into 6 'parts' of differing lengths; within the 'parts' are chapters, also variable in length. Each chapter traces developments in the story of one of the three main protagonists:

*MERCY* - a young Korean-American woman, and recent Columbia graduate - why is she wasting her talents and selling herself too cheap? who pressed her 'self-destruct' button?

*HILLIARY* - a wealthy career wife maintaining an expensive lifestyle - you might envy her, yet her apparent success is overlaid by shame and sadness in

*the face of her inability to conceive.*

*MARGARET - a married mother who appears to have everything that the other two crave - yet she also is locked into irresolvable grief.*

*The nature of expatriation is laid before us through these women's lives, a mosaic of myriad different components having one overwhelming feature in common - they all 'belong' somewhere else. The differences between these three expatriates add interest, but what really latches up the tension and excitement is the increasing evidence of how much they have in common. As the book progresses we are propelled towards the crisis of collision between the three lives. But is it entirely a collision? in some places it feels more like collusion.*

### **Jane Gilman**

*I must confess straight off that I was not an unbiased reader of this novel as I have myself spent several years as an expatriate in Hong Kong. I was interested by the synopsis and was delighted to be picked as a reviewer. **Unfortunately I did not find this novel an interesting read.** Apart from a few place names this is not an experience of life in Hong Kong at all. Of course the characters have to be a little "more" than regular life to make a good story but these are caricatures. All of the stereotypes and clichés that exist have been used here. Thankfully in real life they are just that the odd exception and easily avoided. As this was a very American centered story perhaps they do exist in the American expat community as a 'Brit' perhaps my experience was different but I did have American friends and do not recognize any of them here!*

*I do feel that the author set out to write about how it is to be "other" to have all usual mores striped away and having to find your place in the community again either as an expat or an immigrant. The synopsis sounded intriguing but I am afraid an interesting opportunity was lost as the author failed to pull it off for me as I lost myself in clichés.*

*I would not recommend to anyone contemplating a life in Hong Kong to read this novel. Especially "the trailing spouse" if indeed they actually still exist.*

### **Sarah Tilley**

***An interesting and engrossing read** but not really about expatriates!*

*I was looking forward to reading this having seen at close quarters the expat lifestyle. Although an interesting and engrossing read, I was left feeling a little*

*disappointed as I feel that a lot more could have been added.*

*The book seems really more about a missing child, and the effect that has on the main subjects, and so I feel that the title may be a little misleading. Although it speaks in broad terms about the lifestyles of the other expats, I think a lot more could have been written about how these women settle in to what can be a life of unbridled luxury, with staff and drivers – how do they adapt to the (often) sudden change of lifestyle, and what do the staff think of their foreign employers? How do the children adapt to this lifestyle, and does this have a negative impact on how they perceive a “normal” childhood to be?*

*Other than a little insight in to the life of Koreans, I am no wiser now than before I read the book.*

*I also thought the epilogue was hard to believe.*

*For me, it was a decent enough read, and maybe I would have been happier had it been given a different title!*

## **Julie Collins**

***‘The Expatriates’ is a moving tale about three women in Hong Kong: what took them there and what keeps them there and most importantly how on this tiny island everything is public, including pain.***

*‘The Expatriates’ tells the story of three women in Hong Kong, some wealthy some not, some mothers, some not. Some honest most of the time, some dishonest sometimes. One thing they have in common is that they are all suffering and despite the personal nature of their suffering, much of their pain is visible to all as they co-exist in the tiny, transient world of high rise, high stakes Hong Kong.*

*Although Lee's characters deal with tragedy, this is not a depressing novel. It is a testament to the endurance of strong women who don't sit back waiting for someone to come along and solve their problems, they just get on with their lives as best they can.*

*An uplifting read.*

## **Caroline Mathews**

***An enjoyable read, the story of three very different expat women whose lives intersect, set in modern day Hong Kong.***

*Having read Janice Lee's previous novel, 'The Piano Teacher', and really enjoyed it, I was looking forward to this, and wasn't disappointed. I enjoyed the different characters of the three women, and found reading about expatriate life in Hong Kong very interesting.*

*I felt the storyline could have been a little more enthralling, but the writing itself drew me in enough not to find this a problem.*