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LoveReading Reader reviews of **Exposure** By Helen Dunmore



CORNERSTONE

Below are the complete reviews, written by LoveReading members.

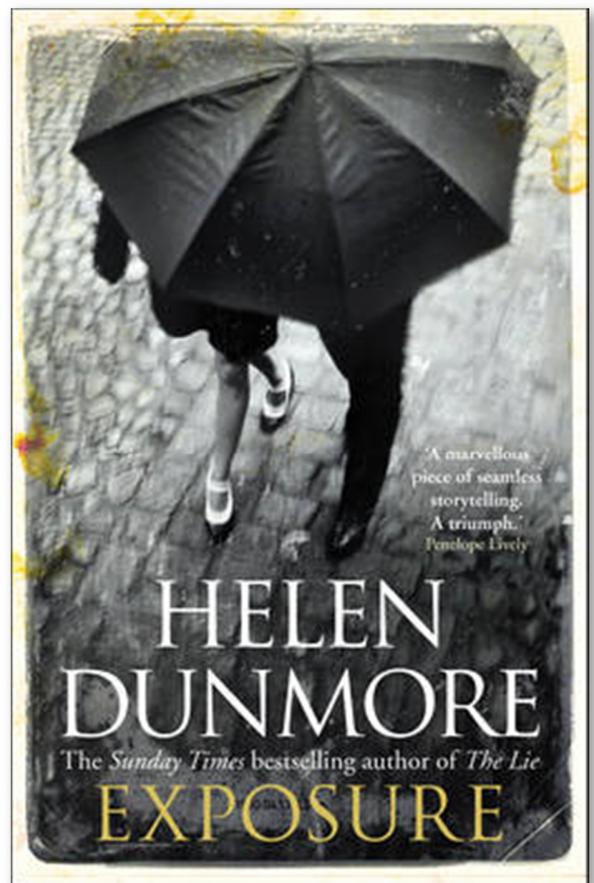
Elaine Lowe

Helen Dunmore has successfully captured a true feeling of the 1960's in this intriguing novel. It immediately evokes memories of that era and transports you back to a time when people's attitudes and way of life were so different than they are today.

The plot unfolds very quickly and you are drawn in to the web of secrets and lies that connect the three main characters. You feel empathy as their grim, sad and troubled pasts are revealed.

*At first I thought this book was going to be all about spies and subterfuge but it wasn't, it is much more about love and relationships between adults and even love from a child's point of view. It shows the choices and lengths one would go to for the sake of love. Sights, sounds and smells are very descriptive and it is a **beautifully written** novel.*

I enjoyed this book immensely, not only did it take me back to my own childhood, it also reminded me of memories and sayings of that bygone era. It made me realise the difficulties and prejudice people faced at that time and how life was not always as simple as it appeared to be.



Sarah Musk

A beautifully written book about the effect of betrayal and imprisonment on an ordinary family. Helen Dunmore is always worth reading for interesting characters full of depth.

Helen Dunmore writes absolutely beautifully. I was hooked from the very beginning - I love her elegant, understated storytelling and her subtle understanding of people's motives for their behaviour and action.

It all starts with a fall down some stairs followed by a phone call and a chain of events is set off which has far reaching consequences for the characters in the book. There is some back story about an unconventional love affair and Lily's childhood - this helps to explain their actions in the present. The subject matter is about the effect of betrayal and imprisonment on the family of an accused man - a different viewpoint from the usual spy thriller. The ending is shocking but actually in keeping with the resilience and the survival instinct of one of the main characters.

This is the third book I have read by Helen Dunmore. I think she is a very instinctive, clever writer - good with motivation and understands what makes people tick. This book is another example of these qualities. She is always worth reading.

Lorraine Blencoe

*A very different version of events in this cold-war espionage tale. Seen from the perspective of the wife and children of a man employed as a civil servant. His hidden past holds him to ransom. The wife's view of the world is coloured by having been a Jewish child who fled from Nazi Germany with her mother. It's **an absorbing and finely woven story that's typical of Helen Dunmore.** Thoroughly readable and with a nice twist at the end that proves that a woman will do anything to protect her family. **Looking forward to whatever this gifted writer comes up with next.***

Katrina Oliver

A fascinating and thrilling story of the life of those involved in spying for the Russians during the Cold War in Britain. Highly recommended!

A fascinating and informative read. This story draws you into the world of

1960's Britain at the height of the Cold War between Russia and Britain. Spying is a highly dangerous game and the forces of power will use anything to manipulate you to their own ends. Simon and Lily, a married couple with children, are drawn into this shady world when Simon helps an old friend. Experiences in the past quickly become increasingly relevant in their lives today and will eventually decide whether they will have a future. A gripping and exciting read, which gives you a real insight into the cold, steely determination of those involved in the trading of information during the Cold War. Highly recommended read.

Sue Broom

Lily is one of Helen Dunmore's most vivid and endearing creations. I loved everything about this book - a great start to the 2016 reading year.

I know Helen Dunmore is a wonderful writer so was very excited to receive this latest book to review. It is set in a different period of time from her earlier novels, England in the 1960s. The Cold War is at its height and the British establishment fears the Soviet Union seeking to undermine it. The 'exposure' of the title refers to much more than the unmasking of Russian spies, though the main events stem from this and other revelations about the male characters, none of whom are attractive personalities. For me, the most interesting character is Lily. She fears a different exposure - to physical and emotional danger. Vulnerable from an early age through the circumstances of her childhood, she marries into the seemingly solid and dull English middle class only to find herself still the object of prejudice and violence. She is a genuinely good person, sensitive to others and devoted to her family, and has developed an inner strength that you hope will see her safely through a dangerous time. One of Helen Dunmore's most vivid and endearing creations.

As beautifully written as I had expected, the atmosphere of an England just emerging from the austere war years is particularly well described. A child of the 60s myself, I could relate to Lily and the children's experiences of everyday life. Loved everything about it - a great start to the 2016 reading year.

Pam Kennedy

A very good read and an interesting story, I really enjoyed it.

I have read a couple of Helen Dunmore's books before and I thoroughly enjoyed

them and this book, 'Exposure' does not let the side down. I was a teenager in the sixties, we were aware of the cold war, espionage spies and such likes and if I had tried to imagine what the corridors of power were like I am sure this is what it would have been like, not knowing who to trust, friends, family colleagues etc. This book is an excellent read from start to finish. I loved it and cannot wait for her next book. I would recommend it to anyone.

Karen McIntosh

Wonderfully tense thriller set in Cold War era London. A brilliant read.

Simon and Lilly live with their three children in Muswell Hill in 1960. Simon goes off to work at the admiralty every day and Lilly teaches languages at the local school. Their lives are turned upside down and both become embroiled in the sinister world of cold war spying when Simon foolishly decides to help an old friend.

A missing file, secrets from the past and so much that is left unsaid form what is a brilliantly told story, full of tension and intrigue. It is a captivating book where secrets hidden for years are slowly teased out. The truth could bring disgrace and prison for Simon. Lilly has her own secrets from the past that she'd rather keep to herself and doesn't open up to anyone. She takes the burden of keeping her family safe and together.

Life in 1960 London is described so well, I felt as if I was right there - the smog, gentlemen wearing hats and children with so much freedom. Set only 15 years after the war it seems a foreign place to the modern reader.

I loved the skilful ramping up of tension as the book reached its conclusion.

Sandra Rabiasz

Not just a Cold War tale of espionage but a beautifully observed story about love and betrayal.

It's the height of the cold war and Simon Callington is a civil servant at the Admiralty. Married to Lily and with three young children, his life unravels spectacularly when he responds to a late night phone call from an old friend. Secrets and betrayals threaten the family from both inside and out and, as the opening line says, "It isn't what you know or don't know, it's what you allow yourself to know".

The story is told in a very direct, economical sort of way that effortlessly conjures up not just the atmosphere of the times but also the emotions and motivations of adults and children alike. Every comment and action, thought and deed is relevant to the story and your understanding of the characters and plot. I really enjoyed this book, not just as a Cold War tale of espionage but also as a beautifully observed story about betrayal and love.

Jillian McFrederick

In her inimitable style Helen Dunmore tells the tale set in England during the Cold War. Concentrating on one family with a few skeletons in their closet, we are submersed in an era of suspicion, subterfuge and double dealing. The irony of this tale is that despite German family connections and homosexual tendencies the accused are innocent and the sense of indignation and frustration that the reader feels is what drives the plot to the satisfactory conclusion. We admire Lily as her husband is accused of spying and imprisoned, as she rallies and shows great resilience, as she relocates her children and finds new employment. This story is as much about her as it is about her husband Simon, whose seedy past is thrown in her face.

A great read which follows on from other great titles by Helen Dunmore.

Sarah Jones

The reader is dropped into a multi-layered story set in 1960 with its Cold War paranoia and homophobia.

As the story progresses, these layers are peeled back and secrets are revealed, a homosexual affair, a hidden German ancestry, the possibility of treason and double agents.

At one point, Lily describes how her husband's brothers conspired to drop her in the lake at Stopstone, the family estate.

The mental image of ripples in the lake seemed like a metaphor for the effect of the missing Top Secret file on the lives of those linked to it; ripples that spread out to touch friends, fellow employees, family members and neighbours.

The characters come vividly to life even the minor ones; Giles, the spy who realises that his era is over, Lily, the loyal wife who is determined to protect her children, Julian Clowde, Giles' superior, whose charming facade hides coldness and a willingness to go to great lengths to hide his own secrets and Erica, Lily's

true friend after Simon is arrested.

A great read and evocative of the period.

Ray Orgill

*'Exposure' is a quite chilling demonstration of how a perceived criminal act by one member of a family can inflate until it affects all members of the family in a very shocking way. The action takes place during the heated atmosphere of the Cold War and Simon Callington, a junior Admiralty clerk, whilst doing his boss's bidding becomes accused of passing information to the enemy and is questioned and then arrested and remanded in prison pending trial. Soon their three young children are being verbally abused by neighbours. So on it goes with Mrs Callington losing her job for which she is ably suited and this reduces the remaining family to a state bordering on penury. The impending trial date drags on but then certain facts begin to slot into place. The complete saga reaches a very satisfactory end. **An excellent read for the espionage fan.***

Edel Waugh

*The story is based around one family during the Cold War in the 1960's in London. One of the main characters who is called Lily is shocked when her husband Simon is arrested for horrible crimes against his country and taken away from her. Having to take care of their children and home she is struggling to cope. During a time when spies were everywhere Lily believes her husband has been set up but can't understand why or how, making this story very intriguing. **If you like books about elicit love and lies during war time then this book would be an excellent choice.** Lily made a terrific narrator for most of the book and her strength and bravery were commendable against everything that was thrown at her.*

<http://edelwaugh.blogspot.ie/2016/01/exposure-by-helen-dunmore-review.html?m=1>

Angie Rhodes

*A little slow to start with but once you got into the story, it was **a really good read.***

November 1960 the Cold War is in full swing. Stories about spies fill the newspapers and Governments know how to hide and bury their secrets.

Simon, a happily married man living in London with his wife Lily and their children, is asked by a friend to collect and pass on a file. Simon can't help but look and now Simon is in prison. Lily knows something is not quite right, and she and the children are in danger.

I enjoyed this because it wasn't the usual spy story as it is told not only from the 'spies' side, but also from the wife's.

Deborah Mika

This is a spy thriller set in the 1960s Cold War era. Giles who is really part of the spy network is put in hospital and he asks Simon to fetch a file he was working on and return it to the office where they both work. He fetches the file but cannot find any reasonable excuse for having the file nor how he can return it without questions being asked. As they know he has the file he is then put in prison and forced to plead guilty or past crimes will come to light. We are shown how the characters are involved with each other and get a view from all angles. This includes family and friends of the Simon and his family.

*I found the book very difficult to get into which I was disappointed about as I have read Helen Dunmore before and got totally engrossed in her novels. I think part of this was that you didn't spend very long with any of the characters. **I enjoyed the ending of the novel and the twist.***

Allison Batten

Disappointing read!

Sadly I wasn't keen on this book.

I have read previous novels by this author and have enjoyed them. I didn't think this was up to the usual standard however and I did struggle to finish it.

Set in the Cold War in the 1960's it is well written and had great potential to be a page turning thriller. It just wasn't for me unfortunately!

Katrina Oliver

A fascinating and thrilling story of the life of those involved in spying for the Russians during the Cold War in Britain. Highly recommended!

A fascinating and informative read. This story draws you into the world of 1960's Britain at the height of the Cold War between the Russia and Britain. Spying is a highly dangerous game and the forces of power will use anything to manipulate you to their own ends. Simon and Lily, a married couple with children, are drawn into this shady world when Simon helps an old friend. Experiences in the past quickly become increasingly relevant in their lives today and will eventually decide whether they will have a future. A gripping and exciting read, which gives you a real insight into the cold, steely determination of those involved in the trading of information during the Cold War. Highly recommended read.

Gavin Dimmock

London, 1960. The Cold War rages and, for Simon and Lily Carrington, they face a fight to save themselves and their children. But, their pasts refuse to stay hidden.

London, 1960. The Cold War escalates and Simon Callington, a mid-level government official, is falsely accused of spying for the Russians. As powerful men plot against Simon, his wife, Lily, must fight to protect herself and their children. Though innocent of the espionage charges, Simon must keep his wife from discovering his past.

This is a departure from many "spy" novels I've encountered to date. The minutiae of "spy craft" - the scheming, trickery and deception - routine in many other books is largely forsaken. Instead, the focus is on the relationships between Simon, Lily, their children and the forces against them and this provides an intriguing and interesting perspective from which to view this period of our recent history. The novel is set at the height of the tense stand-off between the East and West and I was, initially, disappointed by the lack of familiar scenes and actions common among other books of this ilk. Helen Dunmore's skilful writing and compassionate handling of her characters draws you in and you soon become absorbed.

The plot moves easily between the various characters, their differing motives, fears and expectations are deftly woven into an evocative tale. I especially liked Lilly; she has a strength and depth of character that builds and grows ever more fearsome as the tale unfolds.

I felt that the tale dipped a little in intensity in the mid-section. However, it builds to a tense and pulsating finale that doesn't disappoint.

All in all, this was a satisfying read and, with several of her books on my shelves, this won't be my last exposure to the works of Helen Dunmore.

<https://themoustachioedReader.wordpress.com>

You can follow Gavin on Twitter: @Gav_The_Bantam