



Astonishing Splashes of Colour

By Clare Morrall
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Introduction

Astonishing Splashes of Colour takes its title from J.M. Barrie's description of Peter Pan's *Neverland*. It follows the life of Kitty Maitland, a woman, who, in a sense, has never grown up. She lives an improvised life reviewing children's books, visiting her husband in the apartment next door, and fostering a growing obsession to replace her lost child.

Kitty's appealing personality drives this novel, as she relates her story in a jumbled state of consciousness. Her moods swing dramatically from high to low and are illuminated by an unusual ability to interpret people and emotions through color.

Kitty struggles to uncover the secrets of her childhood from her father and brothers, but their revelations threaten to overwhelm her tenuous hold on reality, leaving the reader feeling both sympathetic and horrified with her journey into madness.

Questions for Discussion

1. How does Kitty Maitland's profession relate to her feelings about the stillborn birth of her son, Henry?
2. To what extent are the unusual arrangements of Kitty's marriage to James suggestive of emotional absences or failings in their relationship?
3. What does Kitty's secret night out at the theater with her nieces, Rosie and Emily, reveal about the nature of her grief?
4. How do Kitty's childhood attachments to her four brothers compare to the independent relationships she has with each of them as an adult?
5. How does *Astonishing Splashes of Colour* address the dramatic consequences of family secrets and lies?
6. What role does Kitty's unique awareness of color and its emotional resonances play in her ability to perceive the world around her?
7. How would you characterize Kitty's feelings about Margaret, the woman she believes to be her mother?
8. Which situation -- the loss of her child, or the loss of her real mother -- do you think affects Kitty more profoundly? Why?
9. To what extent are Kitty's abductions of a newborn and of Megan signs of mental illness, and to what extent are they manifestations of her grief?
10. What effect does the author's decision to leave Kitty's situation unresolved at the end of the book have on you as a reader?

About the Author

Astonishing Splashes of Colour, Clare Morrall's debut novel, was a finalist for the Man Booker Prize, the most prestigious literary award in England. Morrall lives in Birmingham, England, where she's raised two grown children and is a music teacher. She is at work on her next novel.