The Taxidermist’s Daughter
William Morrow

By Kate Mosse
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Introduction

Bestselling author Kate Mosse is at the height of her storytelling powers with this deliciously eerie spinetingler, a historical thriller in the best Gothic tradition.

Questions for Discussion

1. Connie and her father are both attracted to the art of taxidermy because, as Connie puts it: “…in death, beauty could be found…through an act of preservation, a new kind of life was promised. Immortal, perfect, brilliant, in the face of a shifting and decaying world.” How does that strike you? What do you think of taxidermy?

2. Despite her memory loss, Connie always has a strong memory of being loved and cared for, although she isn’t sure who she’s remembering. How does that sustain her? When does the comfort of that memory become especially necessary?

3. Harry describes Connie as: “No fuss, a far stronger stomach than his. Formidable, though she hadn’t been one of those hard girls.” Is Connie that way by nature or nurture? Do you agree that she isn’t a “hard girl?”

4. Connie tests Harry by showing him each of the taxidermist’s tools, and describing its use: “She kept glancing at his face, trying to work out his reaction to her, a woman, talking in such detail.” What reaction is she expecting? Why?

5. Mrs. Christie observes that it’s “A wonderful thing, how the mind protects itself.” Is this true for Connie? What about Mr. Gifford? Or Cassie?

6. Fishbourne is constantly threatened by rising water, and at the climax of the novel, a flood literally sweeps away three people, bringing their stories to a shocking conclusion. Is that a satisfying ending? How else might their stories have ended?
7. Connie destroys the pages in Cassie’s journal in order to “spare him from knowing the worst.” Is she right to do so? What does it mean that she’s seeking to hide the truth to spare him, just as he did when she was a little girl?

8. The serial killer at the heart of the novel says at its start that this is “…not a story of revenge, though it will be seen as that. This is a story of justice.” Do you agree?