

Girl Who Wrote in Silk by Kelli Estes

Martin County Library System Book Club Kit:

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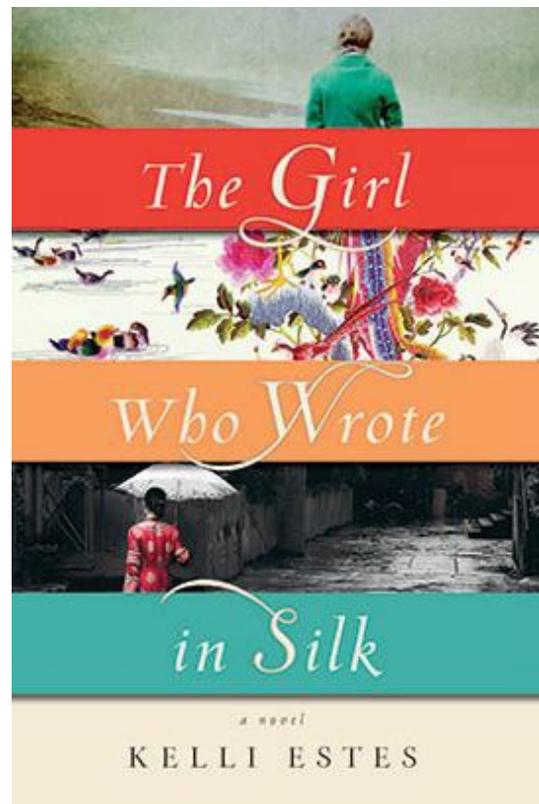
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Book summary

The smallest items can hold centuries of secrets...

Inara Erickson is exploring her deceased aunt's island estate when she finds an intricately embroidered piece of fabric hidden in the house. As she peels back layer upon layer of the secrets it holds, Inara's life becomes interwoven with that of Mei Lien, a young Chinese girl mysteriously driven from her home a century before. Through the stories Mei Lien tells in silk, Inara uncovers a tragic truth that will shake her family to its core — and force her to make an impossible choice.

Inspired by true events, Kelli Estes's brilliant and atmospheric debut serves as a poignant tale of two women determined to do the right thing, and the power of our own stories.



Author's website (kelliestes.com)



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Meet the Author

I didn't always want to be a writer, simply for the fact that I truly didn't know it was an option. Growing up I loved reading so much that I thought authors must have special powers or live behind gilded gates somewhere far away from where I lived in rural eastern Washington State.

Still not seeing a literary life as my path, I earned my Bachelor of Science degree in Business Management from Arizona State University and went to work for a large airplane manufacturer in the Seattle area as a buyer/contract administrator. I'd always had a love of travel, having grown up in a travel-loving family, but this job took me to places such as New Zealand, Belgium, Switzerland, and Scotland. I should have realized I was a writer when, while visiting these countries and touring fabric and carpet mills, which I found fascinating, my imagination was on fire with story ideas. Still, I didn't think I could write.



And then one day, while visiting with my now-husband's brother and his girlfriend, the girlfriend mentioned she was writing a book. She was the first person I'd ever met who professed to be a writer and she appeared normal, not like the fabled creatures of my imagination. It was then that I realized that anyone can write. I could try to write a book! That girl, Carolyn, is now my sister-in-law and I will forever be grateful to her for opening my world to the possibility that I could be a writer.

Not long later, I quit that buying job to pursue writing full-time as well as to become a wife and mother. Today I live near Seattle with my husband and two sons and find that a perfect day includes time spent with them, exercise, time spent outdoors, hot tea, a variety of vegetables, and writing. Lots and lots of writing.

Author's website (kelliestes.com)



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Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the role of race in this novel. What are some examples of racial discrimination you have experienced in your own life? Do you feel race relations have improved in the more than a century that has passed since Mei Lien's time? Why or why not?
2. Discuss Mei Lien's decision to hide herself and her son away on the farm to avoid contact with other people. In her shoes, would you have done the same thing or something different? Why?
3. Before reading this novel, had you already been aware of the "driving out" of Chinese people from American and Canadian towns? Share what you know. If you weren't previously aware of these events, what was your reaction to learning of these racial purges?
4. Family relationships are a key theme in *The Girl Who Wrote in Silk*. In what ways do you think Mei Lien and Inara have similar familial experiences? In what ways are their experiences different?
5. Both Mei Lien and Inara struggle with the death of loved ones. Discuss how their methods of mourning and honoring their lost loved ones differ or are similar. Is there anything they do or do not do that surprises you?
6. Fill in the blank: What would the title of your life story be? "The Girl/Boy Who _____."
7. Orcas Island feels magical to Inara in such a way that she knows she belongs there, but can't really explain why. Have you ever felt that way about a place you've visited or lived? What was it that spoke to your soul?

Source: Princeton Book Review (princetonbookreview.com) and author's website (more discussion questions are available at http://www.kelliestes.com/docs/TGWWIS_reading_guide.pdf)

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Recipes

Grandma's Lace Cookies

- 1/2 cup butter
- 3/4 cup white sugar
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1 cup quick cooking oats
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon baking powder



Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Line a baking sheet with aluminum foil and spray with cooking spray.

Melt butter in a microwave-safe bowl in a microwave. Add sugar and stir to combine. Add beaten egg and mix well. Stir in oats, flour, vanilla, salt, and baking powder.

Drop teaspoonfuls of dough onto the prepared baking sheet, leaving plenty of room to spread. Bake in the preheated oven until edges are golden brown, about 8 minutes. Let cool completely before removing cookies from foil.

Source: Allrecipes.com ([allrecipes.com/recipe/274070/grandmas-lace-cookies](https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/274070/grandmas-lace-cookies))

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Homemade Pot Stickers

- 1 lb. ground pork
- 2 green onions thinly sliced
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 2 cloves garlic minced
- 1 teaspoon sesame oil
- 1/2 teaspoon chili paste
- 1 teaspoon sesame oil
- 1 teaspoon hoisin sauce
- 2 teaspoon soy sauce
- 1 package wonton wrappers



Slice the onions and mince the garlic. Lightly mix all the ingredients together (except the wonton wrappers). Don't over-mix, just make sure everything is combined.

Place wonton wrapper on board or baking sheet. Have a cup of water nearby. Place one teaspoon of mixture in the center of the wrapper. Dip your finger into the water bowl and run it around the edge of the wrapper. Fold the edges together and seal. Set finished Pot Stickers aside. Crimp edges if desired. Complete the process with the remaining potsticker wrappers.

Find a pot your bamboo steamer will fit in. Fill with about two inches of water. Turn on high and bring to a boil. While the water is coming to a boil, line the bamboo steamer with lettuce or kale leaves. Set the pot stickers on the lettuce. Do not overcrowd. Steam for 15-20 minutes until the pot stickers are cooked. Serve immediately with your favorite dipping sauce.

Source: Bowl me over (bowl-me-over.com/how-to-make-pot-stickers)

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