



The Mysteries of Glass

Sue Gee

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It's the winter of 1860 when Richard Allen, a young curate, travels to a small hamlet outside Hereford to take up his first position. It's in this quiet place of wind and trees, birds and water that Richard is to fall passionately in love - but he cannot find fulfilment, for his lover is Susannah Beddoes, the wife of the vicar of his new parish. As Richard's feelings challenge him to his core, he develops a strange relationship with another woman, the solitary and eccentric Edith Clare. Against the backdrop of immense social and industrial change, the consequences of Richard and Susannah's affair are dramatic as they - as well as Oliver Beddoes - grapple with doubt and what it means to lose faith when the great certainties are in question. And throughout it all, the crossing-keeper's daughter Alice Birley - an observer of incidents and events she does not fully understand - has her own part to play...

The Mysteries of Glass Details

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Author : Sue Gee

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From Reader Review The Mysteries of Glass for online ebook

Staci says

<http://freshinkbooks.blogspot.com/200...>

Jane says

What a pile of tripe. Very predictable, and not very well written either.

Mary Kelly says

An interesting story based around the conflicting emotions faced by a curate who falls in love with a married woman. At times the story was quite slow but on the whole a good read.

Susannah Bell says

This is the strongest book on feminist issues I have ever read - and I only realised when I was finished that it was a feminist book. So much of it describes the incredible beauty of nature, of the curate's love of nature and his place in it. This really slows the story down, but then, it's not a story to be rushed: boy loves girl, boy can't have girl. It's as simple as that. But of course, there are layers to this: every female character, in today's world, would not be forced to endure their narrow lives. I think we forget sometimes how much freedom women now have (in the society written about here) - not only do we have the freedom to think but to be. Set in the 1860 Victorian countryside, we have only a few months here of the new curate's arrival in an ordinary village. From the harsh winter to a deliciously warm, bountiful spring, the drama unfolds to a climax that is expected (ruined rather by the blurb) but still has unexpected aspects.

This book is exquisitely written. The young curate's pain is drawn so finely that the book never feels slow. There is space for the reader to decide their own ending and naturally I came up with the happiest one imaginable because this is a character that deserves happiness. It's so seldom that one gets to read a book about someone who is utterly good but who doesn't know it.

Sue Gee writes beautifully - she makes every other psychological drama/romance seem crass and clumsy. It also makes me relieved to be living in this modern era.

Kathleen says

What a great writer! So glad this author was brought to my attention - definitely not a time waster.

Leah says

This book follows the story of a young curate in a simple village. He falls in love with the current minister's wife. Minister dude is really ill. Curate and the wife have an affair. He's kicked out of the village and the story ends with him leaving.

I really enjoyed reading this book, but I hate the way the story turned out. I don't like books that have no ending or a lack of redemption. I love the way this author writes, but eh, I wouldn't recommend this one too highly.

Linda Amos says

A nice story, a bit 'old fashioned' in the way that love was always expressed and kept behind closed doors. A clergymen, Richard Allen, is sent to a rural parish in Herefordshire to become the curate. It is the middle of a very cold winter. He finds a small welcoming community, and a run-down church. He struggles with his faith as he falls in love with the vicar's young wife. The author's description of the natural world is wonderful, I could almost feel the cold of his arrival and see the birds swooping in the spring.

Vivienne says

I found this a beautifully written story about a young curate and his forbidden love for the wife of his senior colleague. In it Susan Gee does not bow to modern sensibilities but examines what such a love would mean to these individuals and the environment in which they live. I read it in a single day as it was due to be discussed at a reading group meeting though I rather wish that I had given myself more time to appreciate its graceful pace.

Sue Gee evokes her rural setting and the passing of the seasons in the early 1860s with great skill. There are also musings about religion as Richard comes to address his faith. Of course the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of the Species* the previous year is making its impact, though it is only one aspect of his questioning.

Another reviewer on Goodreads remarked on its feminist themes, which are certainly present though understated. At one point Susannah says to Richard: "*sometimes I have thought I can hardly bear to be a woman.*". When he protests she continues: "*I am a woman - I must do nothing. Women must suffer, women must wait, women must follow, must be quiet and good, must never say what we feel*". A powerful sentiment, which is reflected by the lack of power experienced by a number of women in the novel.

I found it a bitter sweet story though I am glad it was selected for the group as I would never have picked it up otherwise. However, I seemed to be alone in enjoying it as it wasn't to the taste of my fellow reading group members who complained about its slow pace. I offered my opinion that Susan Gee was seeking to evoke the atmosphere of Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford*, a novel that is mentioned favourably by Susannah in the narrative.

Mand says

I found this book astonishing. I loved her painterly, evocative language and in no way did I find it slow. I was seeped in the period of the time, the slow changing of the seasons, the wonderful descriptions. A reviewer wrote that Gee "is a magical writer" and I agree.

Without spoiling the story - I found the loss of faith of one of the characters a little hard to believe, but otherwise a perfect, beautiful and wrenching book. I was sorry when it ended

Helen says

It's the winter of 1860. Following the death of his father, the young Richard Allen takes his first position as curate in an isolated Herefordshire parish. At first Richard is eager to do well in his new post – but then he falls in love and finds that his faith is put to the test.

The *Mysteries of Glass* was nominated for an Orange Prize back in 2005 and I can see why, because Sue Gee's writing is beautiful. I have rarely read a book with such a strong sense of time and place. The book is set in an isolated village in 19th century England and the rural Victorian setting felt entirely believable.

The opening chapters perfectly evoked a winter atmosphere. Although I was reading this book in July, I could still picture the cold, wintry landscape, the snowy fields, the frozen paths leading to Richard Allen's lonely house, the skating party on the lake. Later in the book, as time passed, I could feel the temperatures rise and the seasons change.

Unfortunately, I had one or two problems with this book. I found it very, very slow – I had to force myself to read at a slower pace than I normally would because I felt I was starting to skim over the words without really absorbing them. After the first few chapters, in which very little actually seemed to happen, I had to make a decision whether or not to continue reading. I was glad that I persevered with it, though. I don't like abandoning books and this one was so well written and had such a haunting, dreamlike atmosphere that I really wanted to love it.

The characters were realistic and well-drawn, from Alice Birley, the crossing-keeper's solemn little girl to Edith Clare, the mysterious woman who lives in the woods. However, I thought some of the characters who were potentially the most interesting were very underused, such as Richard's strong, hot-tempered sister Verity.

Another problem I had was that the religious aspects of the book were a bit too much for me. Knowing that the story was about a curate, I was prepared for this to some extent but I wasn't really expecting the church scenes to be quite so dominant. If you don't like that type of thing, you should be aware that it forms a very large part of the book and that the central theme of the story is the portrayal of a man's inner turmoil as he tries to reconcile his feelings and emotions with his faith and his belief in God.

If this book sounds as if it might interest you at all, then please do give it a try as I definitely seem to be in the minority! *The Mysteries of Glass* wasn't a bad book by any means – it didn't appeal to me but maybe it

will appeal to you.

Brian says

This is the story of a young man from the lower middle classes who sets off to take up his first post as curate in a rural parish on the borderland between England and Wales. At first everything seems idyllic but he soon finds that beneath the tranquil surface lurks all sorts of unpleasantness. Sue Gee's acute physical description conjures up a powerful sense of place, and her ability to convincingly evoke an inner world allows her to explore the impact of science on faith in the second half of the nineteenth century. I found it compelling.

Roberto says

I highly recommend this novel to anyone at least for its wondrous Nature descriptions. Beautiful , you can feel the seasons changing.

Crisscross says

(in addition to what Brian already says) the 'loss of faith' is not the traditional one accepting that modern science rules it out, instead a faith remains whose details are to be sought beyond the narrow confines of the Anglican faith of the period especially, maybe always.

The descriptions of the scenery and rural life of the Kington area are superb and help take one into looking at the story in the context of the period...to the extent that it is possible to do, though that begs the question of whether the modern mind indeed can.

having just read Conrad's "The rescue" one suspects that more correctly circumscribes the possibilities of true love at the time.

I can't think why Sue Gee is not more widely known and discussed.

Catherine says

I loved this book. It is about a young Curate taking up his first position in a country church in Herefordshire. The vicar has a much younger wife but is terminally ill and the Curate and Susannah on meeting have immediate chemistry between them. The book is set in 1860 and is very well researched. The love story throws into play many moral issues and their relationship causes much heart-searching for two young people who have always followed the teachings of the church. Many people's lives are affected by their actions. I was sorry to get to the last page and would love a sequel!

Karen says

I thoroughly enjoyed this book, about a young curate starting out in his first job in Herefordshire after leaving his widowed mother and sisters at home and living away for the first time.

The author writes so descriptively and it is easy to imagine the scene. The story was beautifully written and is a gentle read for the most part, reminding us of perhaps a simpler time when life moved at a less hectic pace. However there are dark cadences within the story and subjects are introduced which are still difficult to address and talk about in today's world.

In all, just a lovely book to 'read' with a story that is captivating; it reminded me of being a child and listening ardently to stories read out aloud to me.
