



## The Language of Light: A Novel

*Meg Waite Clayton*

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**The Language of Light: A Novel** Meg Waite Clayton  
FINALIST FOR THE BELLWETHER PRIZE

Nelly Grace is starting over. With her two young sons, Nelly has fled to the simple stone house built by her great-grandfather in the moneyed horse country of Maryland in order to escape the grief of her husband's death—and perhaps find a way back to her first love: photography. Easing her transition into this strange, mannered world is Emma Crofton, the grand matriarch of the foxhunting community, and Emma's son, Dac, a handsome yet distant horse trainer. As Nelly slowly makes her way back to the camera, she must come to terms with her troubled relationship with her father, a photojournalist who chose fame over family. But when she finally sees him again, Nelly's fragile new beginning is threatened by revelations of a secret past, and the fears that kept it hidden.

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*From the Trade Paperback edition.*

## **The Language of Light: A Novel Details**

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Author : Meg Waite Clayton

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## From Reader Review The Language of Light: A Novel for online ebook

### **Heatherbrady5 says**

I enjoyed the first part of this book, but ended up being frustrated by it in the end. Some of the characters were deeply flawed-not in a human way, but an unrealistic way. The book never seemed to get around to saying what it wanted to say and it felt unfinished.

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### **Jackie says**

Never truly understood what made any of the characters tick (no pun intended here...not a literary reference to the grandmother clock Emma gave to Nelly for her birthday) even as pivotal life choices were revealed throughout the book. The ending was abrupt, and completely unsatisfying, with many unresolved story lines.

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### **Meg says**

novel

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### **Nancy Baker says**

Perhaps I speak a different language than "The Language of Light". This story had a decent start -- a young widower finds herself trying to build a life for her and her two sons soon after her husband dies. Leaving the urban city for the rural country life in the old family home of her father's family, the Mom is looking for the meaning of life. Her father was a professional photographer and absent from home for much of his own children's upbringing. (I guess a man has to have his priorities.) The daughter, now the widower, has always had a passion for photography and is feeling a pull to follow her father's footsteps. She is torn between knowing if she is good enough to make it a career and wondering how to balance a career and motherhood at the same time. There are varying characters, circumstances and romances intertwined in the story, as well as regrets and remembrances but I just could never quite get the story to click for me. The basis of the story had potential, but it just seemed to fall flat. The ending seemed very rushed and I didn't feel that there was much resolution in the personal issues presented. For this reader, someone forgot and left The Language of Light on the dimmer switch mode.

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### **Susan says**

I kept waiting to get answers to all my questions and then it just ended! So disappointed.

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### **Lisa Eirene says**

In my opinion, there is only one book that successfully pulls off the "tell the story from a minor character" method and that's Wuthering Heights. This book is no Wuthering Heights. You think the story is about Nelly, the widow with two small kids moving to the country. But it really isn't. She mopes around through the book, a rather flat character in my opinion, and tells the story of this neighboring family that I didn't find all that interesting.

While good chunks of the book were interesting enough to keep me reading, they alluded to a plot twist that I guess early on and was hoping they wouldn't do. And then they did it. Lame.

Skip this book.

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### **Meg says**

I needed some chick lit this week....and when I read the reviews here, I worried this was too serious for my mood. As it was the only book I had with me at my sister's....I opened it. I chose the book bc it takes place in B'more....and it is centered around photography and horses.

The story is good...though I am not sure why many people mentioned it was told by a secondary character....Nellie was as much involved in the story as the rest. The main character (and narrator) just lost her husband and has moved to her father's family house in horse country...MD. She immediately befriends an elderly woman and becomes close to the only single, young man in the neighborhood...father also appears and all this while she struggles with the idea of being a photojournalist or a mother.

My problems with the book:

- 1) I figured out a lot of the "mysteries" before the characters....annoying.
- 2) The debate of..."can I be a good mother" if I have a job. I don't think this is a realistic debate.
- 3) I did not believe/like the main character's best friend---her motivations and doings were a bit forced.
- 4) Many unanswered questions at the end.

I did enjoy reading about photography...and living in horse country....its what we all want, right? :)

Read if you are looking for something to distract you...but be prepared to want to stab a character...or two.

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### **Danielle says**

Having read Clayton's second book (The Wednesday Sisters) before reading this one, I must say that she has definitely grown as a writer between the two. While I enjoyed this book, and found some of the facets of the characters amusing neither they nor the story really grabbed me and pulled me in. I was also slightly let down that we don't really get the resolution between Nelly and Dac that I had been so hoping for. I know the reader is supposed to accept that everyone reaches their own ending, but that's not how relationships really work, so I would have liked a bit more wrap up there, but maybe that is just me.[return][return]Language of Light is a good solid story with characters that you can enjoy, but for my tastes I'd send readers looking to read Clayton on to her second book.

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### **Joan Colby says**

This book initially presented as a straight forward story of a young widowed mother who has moved to a family farm in Maryland horse country where she is befriended by an older mentor and is attracted to this woman's son, a horse trainer. To this point, I thought I would like this story.

However, Clayton's premise turned out to be that everyone has secrets; some of which seem to exist, as with Willa's confession of an affair with Emma's husband, to merely reveal flaws in Emma's character.

In fact, the only consistent character is Nelly through whose viewpoint the story is told—but Nelly is the consummate unreliable narrator. Emma's character is the most dubious. Is she the wise older mentor who encourages Nelly in her dream to be a photojournalist like her famous father? Is she the philanthropic creator of homes for orphan girls? Or is she the prevaricator who intimates that Dac may be Nelly's half brother? Is she the dominating mother who will stop at nothing to keep her son at her side including telling him his Vietnamese wife (whom she paid to vanish) is dead? Does she use a similar ploy in suggesting to Nelly that Dac may be the son of her own father?

As for Nelly's father, is he the remote preoccupied photojournalist who neglected his wife and children for his career? Or is he the charming fellow who dotes on Emma?

It's not that people can't be complex, but in "Language of Light" the author fails to convince us that those characters embody such disparate traits. The ending is particularly dissatisfying. Emma is killed, rather gratuitously—the reader saw this coming from the instant Emma voiced her intention to ride in the steeplechase. Dac discovers, via a sudden reversal in strategy by Emma, his grown Vietnamese daughter. Poof—that's it for Dac—we never learn how this affects him and he vanishes from Nelly's life and the book. Nelly's father never really gives her the accolades she craves, basically telling her to value her own work and that life is hard, et al. As for Nelly, other than her expressed determination to pursue a career (when just a few pages earlier, she could not reconcile this with caring for her sons) we have no idea what her path will be. Pretty obviously, it won't involve Dac which is a disappointment. It seems clear that Clayton wanted to reject the pat and anticipated conclusions, but since she fails to postulate convincing alternatives, the reader is left with a sense of incompleteness.

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### **Amie O'Brien says**

4.75

I am torn with this book. Right out of the gate, the writing is spectacular. I had at least a dozen moments throughout where I would just linger on a sentence, taking it in, thinking, "My God, how brilliant. I would give my right arm to be able to pen a scene like that."

There was heart, and I enjoyed that the characters had true human natures. Their being flawed made me want to see where those flaws would take them. I read sitting at my kid's bus stop and stayed up way too late squeezing in just one more chapter (which easily became three). No doubt, I was pining to see if my initial fears for Dac were grounded!

This book had beautiful tension and I think that's where my heart aches just a bit when it wrapped up too quickly. Now I say too quickly, but I suppose it could be said that it was just too quickly for me. An author

knows her story, and just like God and life, we don't always get the outcomes we're praying for.

I think certain characters became so endearing that it was impossible to not dig your heels in and root for them. I wanted that ending. I'm also the kind of person who will look for a love thread in a Cracker Jack box, so I know this is a ridiculous notion and would never hold a fellow author to it.

However, he was a beautiful character and their chemistry was the glue that held the pieces together. I would definitely pick up a delayed sequel, should their be a fresh encounter...

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### **Christa says**

This was the first book I read from Meg Waite Clayton. I did like the setting and the characters, but felt the book unfinished.

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### **Stacy says**

It feels unfinished to me. I don't like it as well as I liked Wednesday Sisters.

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### **Cheryl Miner says**

I read this book because I loved The Wednesday Sisters and wanted to try something else by Clayton. This book wasn't as great, but I enjoyed it nonetheless. Being a photographer myself, I probably appreciated the photography-specific parts more than most. I'm big on enjoying the setting the books I read, and definitely did in this novel, but the ending wasn't spectacular.

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### **Lee D'Anna says**

After reading and loving The Wednesday Sisters, I eagerly dove into another book by this author. What I liked was the detailed descriptions of photography from the taking of the photos to the developing. But there were too many things I didn't like about the book. It is not uncommon for a book to have a prelude and then dive into another time period. But in this one, Nelly's father has obviously passed away but the segue into the main part of the story is not a smooth one: one minute he is dead and the next he is very much alive. Yes, when you read the epilogue, it does tie the story together but it was almost as if the prelude was put in the wrong place.

This is a minor but picky complaint but one an editor should have caught: in the beginning of chapter 13, Willa is bringing the boys home from school but then poof, they are playing soccer (and this is something they never do any other time), with no apparent transition.

Emma is an interesting character as far as strong women go but she alternates between being likeable (in her altruism) but devious and conniving as well. And then there is the whole mystery surrounding who Dac's father is. The reader is given clues that make it kind of obvious but then the book gets to a point where you are left shaking your head... yes you assume you were correct in your guess but it never tells you so. And then there was entirely too much time spent muddling around this topic with no satisfactory conclusion. The

whole thing just kind of went away like it never existed.

Much of the book deals with Nelly seeking her father's love and approval. The other thing that bothered me was that Nelly's brothers were mentioned a lot in the past tense of their childhood but they were never presented as adults. At all. Older brother Danny was very influential in Nelly's childhood and although he is apparently still alive, it made me wonder what happened to him. It would have been better to just mention them in passing and then I would not have missed them.

Having read one of this author's books that I loved and then this one, I will give her another try at some point in the future as I see she has two more novels out there.

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### **Caryn says**

I got this book for a steal when Borders went out of business (sob). I was attracted to it because it combines two of my interests - photography and horses. So I went in with moderately high hopes. However, it never felt like the story ever really... developed or received the closure it should have.

\*Spoiler alert\*\*

It left me feeling somewhat flat... the only time it REALLY got my attention was the revelation that Dac was the protagonist's brother. Story felt all over the place and I never really got the sense that she was mourning the loss of her husband or even was truly battling with the demons that were brought up about her relationship with her husband. Characters felt a bit flat.

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