



The Butterfly Legacy

Kathleen M. Rice

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July 1952 is teenaged Raleigh Buchanan's last vacation on Country Pond, New Hampshire, where for the previous two summers he and an Irish boy had traded notes. Feeling the familiar rush of intrigue, Raleigh removes the kid's latest note from behind the ceramic half-moon tacked above the cottage door. The note contains a riddle half-written in Gaelic. Mystified and irritated, he puts the note away with other childish things - soon to be forgotten.

Twenty-six years will pass before Raleigh, now a Boston police detective, realizes that the note holds clues he needs to solve a murder; and that it contains the key to his true heritage, which began with star-crossed lovers a century before he was born.

Against the backdrop of Ireland's "Great Hunger," the violent struggle of the 1860s to free Ireland, and "The Troubles" of the 1970s, *The Butterfly Legacy*, a 95,000-word historical novel, is a richly rendered story of Nelly, a young Irish girl and her descendants that began when she and an English captain fall in love. Resulting in twins who are separated at birth, their affair ends with the captain's presumed abandonment of Nelly and her subsequent exile to Prince Edward Island, Canada where she enters into an arranged marriage to a man she does not know.

From Nelly's near fatal voyage with the healthier twin across the Atlantic in a "coffin ship" to the 1978 murder of an Englishman whose brutalized body is found on the grounds of Winnekenni Castle located in Haverhill, Massachusetts (the city featured in Andre Dubus's acclaimed memoir, *Townie*), the novel traces the adventures of 6 generations of characters as they encounter adversity and twists of fate, suicide and other family secrets, misguided patriotism and murder. These themes - tempered with healthy doses of Irish wit - will resonate with readers from most any ethnic group as they are drawn into the pain and joy of difficult lives fully lived.

Amazon.com Best Seller

The Butterfly Legacy Details

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From Reader Review The Butterfly Legacy for online ebook

Heidi says

This book starts off pretty good and I found the Irish potato famine really interesting. I was chugging along this book thinking it was interesting enough but it gets confusing towards the end.

It starts with two boys who exchange letters each summer when they vacation at the same cabin. Then it goes back to one of the boys' ancestors back in Ireland. The story is a good one. It kept me interested up until it flipped to current times (well, 1970 something) and the two boys are grown and one is a cop and one is a terrorist. That's when it gets confusing. The very end of the book is anticlimactic, mostly because you get lost in the genealogy. I finished it anyway because I wanted to say I read the whole thing. It was free on my kindle so I can't complain. But I do not think I would have been happy if I paid for it.

Faith says

I enjoyed reading this book. It quickly captured my attention, and moved at a comfortably fast pace. Practically nothing in the plot went where I thought it would, but always seemed to go the right way. The characters were almost all people I could sympathize with, whether or not I agreed with them -- even Aunt Stella. Not one stands out as a mere stereotype.

I don't know enough about Irish history to say how accurate the history is, but nothing stood out as different from what I do remember from both school and the news. Much of it was the first time I've seen it from the Irish perspective. I appreciate that.

The main thing I disliked is that it just missed being what I would consider a good literary classic. Though, as I just now finished reading and may change my mind, I think my main disappointment is that I am unable to ascertain what the author is trying to say, what her point is. As I say, I only now just finished reading. As I ponder, I may discover the depths I don't see now. As it is for me now, it's a good story, but doesn't seem to have a cohesive point for being told.

There were also bits here and there, that, while not awkward, also were not seamless to the narration as a whole. (There were also several annoying line editing issues in this e-copy, but I won't fault the author for those.)

A cohesive point, or moral, or any reason other than it's a good story aren't always necessary for good entertainment, though. I definitely would recommend this book to anyone who likes a bit of history, a bit of romance, and a bit of mystery mixed together with a hearty salting of dangerous adventure. But don't look for anything purely typical of any of those individual genres.

Diane says

I downloaded this book when I found it offered for free, even though it is not the type of book I normally read.

The story is divided over two time periods. Part of the story takes place in the 19th century. Nelly is a young Irish girl who becomes pregnant after an affair with an English soldier. She gives birth to twins, one strong and one sickly. Leaving the weaker baby in Ireland, she takes the stronger one to Canada where she begins building a new life. Soon after, she receives a letter informing her, wrongly, of the death of the son she left behind. The rest of the story takes place in the 1970s. An employee of the British consulate in Boston is murdered, and as it turns out, the murderer, the victim, and the detective called upon to investigate the crime are all distant relatives, and the key to the solution of this crime lies in the story of the twin brothers who never knew one another.

There were things I liked and things I disliked in this book. The story of Nelly, and the treachery she falls victim to, was very engrossing, and the portrayal of life in Ireland during and after the famine was interesting to read for its own sake, as I don't know a lot about this time period.

But I disliked the awkward way the story of Nelly and her sons was conveyed through the character of Tuckerton O'Connell, the 20th-century descendent of Nelly who has discovered the secrets of his family's past. He is the main character in this book, and I absolutely hated him. He is angry, brooding, conceited, and entirely fixated on grievances and the past. He is also a terrorist. I didn't understand his weird obsession with his great-great-grandfather, and his stalker-like interest in his fourth cousin. I also found the ending rather depressing.

Jody says

This book takes place in Ireland, Canada and New England from the 1800's to 1970's. It is a multi-generational story that is told through letters and stories by a man to his young wife. It starts out with a young lady getting pregnant by an English Captain during the potato famine in Ireland. She has twins who are separated at birth, leaving her to believe that one has died. She takes the other child with her to Canada.

It is a story that is very fast paced and action packed. I read it in two days and found I needed to pay close attention to what was happening. It is a bit hard to follow and remember which generation is now talking as the letters go back and forth between generations. There are references to Neo-Fenians and the IRA. It is historical fiction with mystery too. Very enjoyable.

Emily Rodolff says

Overall the story is a good one. In my opinion the major down side to this book is the laborious details, huge cast of characters. There were almost too many players, many with the same names, that it became difficult at times to remember which Will I was reading about. Also, I love a story that keeps me on the edge of my seat until the final word, so I was utterly disappointed when I had this one figured out about 70% of the way through. There was no surprise ending...to twists. The underlying story is a good one...but I feel drained (not in a good way) after reading this.

I will also say this, the stork-bite was an interesting element...as I have a child with just such a birthmark on the nape of her neck...hers is pinkish in color, but does sort of resemble the butterfly. She was also born with one on her eyelid...which faded by the time she was 6 months old. So this part of the story did intrigue me

somewhat.

Shelley says

This book really hit a chord with me. I am descended from Irish Individuals whose true names are not actually known or documented. At least one of the Great-Great-?Xs grandfathers had a "price on his head" placed there by the English during "troubles". There was a name change, undocumented emigration to Canada, gun running etc. They were from Mayo, Sligo and Kings County so you may have been writing about my family! (and their neighbors) This novel helped me to better understand why my family felt so strongly about certain political issues in another country even several generations later. Thank you for that Kathleen!

The bit of the story that I felt needed to be fleshed out a bit more was the part about the butterflies. Since this is the lynchpin of the novel I think that the signifance shosuld have been enlarged upon earlier and enhaced a bit throughout the narrative. For example: at the birth Sister Lucy could have detailed a legend or belief that being born with a butterfly birthmark was an indication that your blood was of a specific line or a certain power was inherent to those with the mark.. Or Turk could have explained the lore of the butterfly to Clair tying it in as being something rare and significant, either way would have been feasible. I certainly enjoyed reading this novel and will be telling others to read it as well.

Justine says

A little difficult to keep track of all the characters as the story spans so many generations, but very interesting story of intrigue, love, betrayal, revenge, family, terrorism, politics. Something for everyone.

Carol Engler says

The book starts out in 1952 at a cabin called the half moon where two young men pasted notes as one left from vacation and the other came to stay. We quickly jump to current day of the first a adult man with a Gf and son traveling threw Ireland. Him tell her about his family life back in the 1840's to more current day advents. Dealing with the potato famine and a Ill fated love affair. This set up the rest of the story with it many twists. This all brings us back to a surprise ended when these two man met many years later.

Brenda Paulsel says

I got this book on Pixel of Ink through Face book for free. It was a book full of twists and turns that left me wanting to read more. The author's writing was heart felt and the descriptions of Ireland were like painting pictures in my mind. I could see exactly what the author described and wanted to be there myself. I would recommend this book to anyone who does not like the typical and predictable book. I also loved how the family ancestry was kept alive through the generations. It was evident that the characters had pride in their heritage which is also something with which I can identify.

Elizabeth Noah Astle says

Overall the book was pretty good. A boy from Brooklyn and one from Ireland exchange notes over the summer as they stay in the same summer cottage every year back in the 1950's. Then the story goes back in time and back to modern time.

The story ties back in time to the 1800's where a girl Nelly falls in love and ends up having twins. The twins end up separated shortly after birth. h. Tuck (as he is called by his friends and living in the 1950-current) is searching for the ancestors of the other twin. Tuck I think has a lot of anger in him and in a way is holding a grudge from what happened to his 4 times great ancestor. The story follows a lot of their family line along with giving some insight into his life so far.

I enjoyed reading about Nelly and her family line and what happened to them as well as Christopher's family line but in not as much detail. I wish they would have listed the family tree at the beginning of the book instead of the end. I got this as an ebook and did not know this was there until I finished the book.

The ending though was a bit odd in my opinion and I am not sure if I really liked it or not but I did like most of the rest of the book.

Anita says

I really enjoyed this book and I had a hard time putting it down. The historical background of tenant farmers Michael and Fiona Hughes living in Ireland and the terrible suffering and turmoil that took place during the Potato famine added so much credibility to the storyline. It was very interesting. It began with the present and then flashed back in history four generations and showed how the decisions of one generation adversely affected the next generation. An English Captain, William Temple Tuckerton fell in love with Nelly who was one of Michael and Fiona's children. They had a brief affair resulting in the birth of twins who were separated when they were babies and grew up not knowing one another. They lived two very different lives. The book recounts the lies and division that happened when Nellie's Aunt Stella purposely and successfully destroyed Nellie and William's relationship. Nellie's Aunt Stella was living with their family to care for her sister, Nelly's mother, who was ill and dying. You later discover Stella had an out-of-wedlock son who Nelly thought was her eldest brother. Stella sorrowfully becomes even a greater villain not only "a kettle calling the pot black" so to speak as she tries to blackmail William's family into helping them and her own son who was jailed because of his alliance and involvement in the Irish uprising and rebellion. Yet sadly you can understand why Stella felt it was disgraceful for an Irish girl to fall in love with an English man for the British and not just the potato blight were blamed for much of Ireland's sufferings. When the Irish couldn't pay their taxes or rent, their homes were torn down by the British and they became homeless as well as starving. The Irish were bitter because of Britain's lack of aid and lack of compassion in their distress. Many felt Britain just wanted their property. When Britain finally did respond by sending them dried corn, many more Irish died of dysentery because their bodies were unable to digest the coarse grain and they had no mills to grind it.

Thus the story of four generations begins with intrigue, love, family secrets, and revenge. When the storyline transitions from one generation to another, the storyline becomes a bit confusing but it was an amazing tale

of how hate, prejudice, and revenge filtered down through the generations. I would recommend it to others. Why was the book called "The Butterfly Legacy"? It was because of an inherited butterfly birthmark on the back of their necks.

Nenette says

Four generations after...a hundred years...that's how long it took for the complete story to be told, and for the paths of separated twins to cross through their great (to the 5th power) grandsons.

I've had this book for a long time now, and I don't know why I waited to read it. It's a wonderful story that spans more than a century, and was kept alive by people who were proud of their descent that they made sure the tale is passed on through the generations. I can understand some of the reviewers' observation that they got lost in the numerous characters. The English are fond of naming their children after their own name, or their forefathers', and I think that's where the confusion was. I often found myself counting the generations just to determine which Will was being referred to.

Though fictional, it was enchanting to travel back in time and have a peek at the ways of the old life in Ireland. I didn't verify some of the major events related in this book, if they indeed happened. But no matter, whether they were true or not, they lent some semblance of veracity to the story.

Overall, a more-than-good read. Highly recommended.

Paul Garrett says

A multi-generational tale of tragedy and circumstance such as only the Irish could endure. The Butterfly Legacy spans time from the great potato famine of the 1840s to the terrorism of the 1970s. Because the Irish are natural story-tellers, the story strings are passed from generation to generation, with select documentation being preserved. At times this device becomes burdensome, but it also provides a variety of voices. The Irish penchant for a very few given names sometimes makes for confusion.

It is impossible to offer any detail without giving away the ending. Pay more attention to the slow beginning if you want to say "aha!" a bit earlier than the average reader. There is a great deal of detail on historical events that have been fictionalized, and the author paints colorful word pictures of sites in Ireland, Canada, Scotland, England, New England across the centuries depicted. The genealogical material provided at the end is helpful, but difficult to access in e-book format. The Butterfly Legacy is an enjoyable and worthwhile read.

Maureen Kennedy says

I really enjoyed this book. It made me wonder about my own family history and see that great great great gram might have had an interesting life that I totally missed because legends weren't handed down to me. You do have to pay attention to the characters and usually a book like this would confuse me but I found the author held it pretty well together (if you get lost, the back of the book has a genealogy of the characters to help you out). In some books the back and forth in history also loses me but the chapters were clearly

named to keep you aware of the time. I enjoyed learning some of the Irish/British history and conflict and looking up the places in Ireland where the story took place since I was not familiar with the geography. I wanted to keep finding out what happened to each character throughout the book and thus it held my interest.

Kim says

For the most part, I liked this book. The back and forth in time was confusing and redundant (Flash to 1972, then to the 1800s, just to flash further back into the 1800s...) The butterfly aspect felt like it was just tacked on towards the end to give the story a name, it would have been better had it been discussed in the beginning.

The thing I had the biggest problem with, though, was why everyone cared so much about a couple of "bastard" children. I mean, 130 years later, and people are being killed because of it? It's nonsensical.

But I did enjoy the history of Ireland. I wish my family held onto those kinds of stories/artifacts. That's another thing-do people really do that? I don't even know anything about my great-grandparents. Who knows about their great-great-great-great grandmother in detail?
