



The Thing About Clare

Imogen Clark

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A dying wish. A devastating secret. Should the truth really stay buried?

The four Bliss siblings have a loving but complicated bond, but when their mother, Dorothy, dies seemingly without a will, this relationship is put to the test. As the mourning siblings try to make sense of the situation, one of them is caught with a secret: before she died, Dorothy entrusted her favourite daughter with her will and a letter—and told her to destroy them both.

Of course it was Anna their mother turned to for this mission. Miriam, the eldest, is far too sensible; Sebastian, the baby, too sensitive; and Clare, the middle child, has always been too rebellious to rely on, and long ago cut herself out of her siblings' lives.

But what Anna finds in the documents could change everything. Do the other siblings not deserve to know what it is about them that their mother was so desperate to hide? And if it is revealed, will the Bliss family ever be the same again?

The Thing About Clare Details

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From Reader Review The Thing About Clare for online ebook

Anna Maria says

What a boring book. The whole story could have been told in one chapter. Total waste of my time/money. I would not recommend this book.

Lorraine Walker says

A different choice

This is very different to my usual reading choice, but found the story and family dynamics interesting. However, I found it difficult to feel any attachment to the characters after the first few chapters and that spoilt it for me. Have another book by this author on my TBR list, so we'll see how that goes.

Stina says

THE THING ABOUT CLARE was my Kindle First selection for this month and, though this is completely out of my usual genre, I thought the premise sounded rather interesting. Though I do have to say I correctly guessed what "the thing about Clare" actually was before it was even introduced into the story! That being said, it didn't ruin the story for me as I do love trying to figure out what secrets are what and the fact that I often do never spoils the story. I just enjoy the journey.

This book is about family, secrets and the journey of four siblings - Miriam, Clare, Anna and Sebastian. Their parents Dorothy and Frank feature heavily in the "past" chapters, beginning with the siblings as children, in which the story unfolds over the course of their lifetime.

The story begins with Anna, the third sibling, in 2015. Their mother Dorothy has just passed away and the introductory chapter was her funeral, and as the chapter is titled, is from Anna's perspective. I found it heavy in monologue to begin with as Anna muses over her thoughts and emotions - some of which I found slightly irrelevant to the point of irritating in part - but it does give us a vivid picture of her perspective. Particularly as she recounts her mother Dorothy's request regarding the will and the letter. And you just know that, despite trying to maintain respect for her mother, she won't be able to resist reading the letter - which is addressed to Clare. I mean, could you? I could understand Anna's reasoning behind why she decided to read it - to protect Clare - but you just know it is going to blow up in her face when Clare and the others find out. So Anna then faces the conundrum of what to do. However, it's not until over halfway through the book - after the past has been revisited up to the present as the story unfolds - do we discover that Anna actually does have the will and the letter. So of course, the reader does not learn of its contents until over halfway through.

When the story first shifts back to the past, we are transported back to 1961 and Dorothy's POV as she recounts her story as a new mum to the very demanding and painfully teething Miriam. The Dorothy we meet in the beginning is certainly a different Dorothy we meet as the years progress through the various perspectives. She is a new mum, alone with husband Frank away working, and completely unsure of her own

ability as a mother. It is then we also meet their somewhat nosy neighbour Mrs Connors (whose first name escapes me now), and it is somewhat comforting to note that they remain neighbours for the next 50 odd years. Although a background character, Mrs Connors does feature a little more profoundly at the Silver Jubilee when a very unexpected and surprising event occurs - shocking everyone!

As the years go by and the story continues to unfold we meet each of the siblings and are privvy to their own private thoughts and perspectives. Clare's is somewhat tumultuous as she herself is the most colourful of the siblings. They say that there is something about the middle child and Clare crammed into that mould and promptly broke it. She was "the black sheep" and felt like she didn't belong for most of her life. It led to bad decisions and even worse lifestyle choices as she continued to drift through life, and in and out of everyone else's, for pretty much most of the duration. She was the most volatile, defensive and pretty much almost always angry. Is it just middle child syndrome or something much more? Whatever it is, it was plain to everyone that there was just something about Clare.

The story examines the relationship between the siblings and their parents, tackling the difficult times as well as the fond memories. Family dynamics are always different and can often be a minefield with each child having their own unique characteristics. *THE THING ABOUT CLARE* examines those as well as being a journey of discovery for everyone involved. We learn the idiosyncrasies and the personas of each of the siblings, and often during the story we find ourselves as frustrated as each of the siblings. This story is their journey and as we are privvy to their perspectives we share the journey with them.

Once the story comes full circle again to the present day in 2015, we also feel their pain and their grief after the loss of their mother. Just before we reach this point we do meet up with Anna and Dorothy in 2014, just a year previous, where we discover that Dorothy has had a stroke and is now in a care home. I found this scene a little sad as it was clear that in her 80s Dorothy was nearing the end of her life, and just that knowledge alone is saddening after a lifetime of memories. Dorothy struggles to speak but she does - enough to bestow her request of the will to her favourite child. Then fast forward a year and the siblings are at her funeral. Mrs Connors is still a fixture, with her own two cents thrown in, but the siblings decline her offer to help clear out the house.

I did find the scenes where the siblings were sorting through a lifetime of their parents' belongings and memories particularly heartbreaking. It is something I myself dread because in doing so it is with the knowledge that your parents are gone...and with them a lifetime of memories. But as one grows older, if we are lucky enough to still have our parents with us, we also are fully aware that that will not last forever and one day in the not too distant future we too will be saying our last goodbye to them too. And it was this aftermath that broke my heart the most. We journeyed with them all through the years that as the reader we too felt the pain of Dorothy's passing, as inevitable as it must be.

I did have a complaint about one flaw. I don't know where it came from or what happened to it but at one point Dorothy is ticking off a mental list of who is attending Anna's 30th birthday and she mentions "Melissa". I had to stop and think who on earth was Melissa. As she also mentioned Sebastian's new girlfriend Tessa for the first time, I admittedly thought that maybe Melissa was Anna's "partner" as the way she recounted them was as "Anna and Melissa". But there was no further mention of Melissa. She didn't attend the party, and she was never mentioned again. So I have no idea where she came from or what her role was, but to me it appeared she was a mistake since she never featured anywhere again. This error cost this wonderful story a star in my opinion, because while I can overlook many others that always pop up in ebook editions, I cannot overlook that. It was a costly mistake that in the end was irrelevant to the entire story.

Overall, *THE THING ABOUT CLARE* was a beautifully written drama about families - in particular,

siblings - of life, love and the imperceptible bond between them. I thought it was a lovely thought provoking story, not my usual genre, but enjoyable all the same. I was unable to put it down in the end, reading well into the night.

It is unlike me to purchase a book without knowing anything about the Author or their style, but in this case I did and I am surprisingly glad. I really enjoyed the story and the journey it took me on. Definitely recommend!

Ellen says

As part of a large family myself, the relationships between siblings is always complicated. Miriam is the eldest, responsible and organized, while Clare is the second and the black sheep. Anna is seen as her Mom's favorite, and Sebastian is the unexpected baby. The story tells how they each approached their lives, and how they react when a basic truth is tested. An appealing read, thanks to Netgalley for the ARC.

??? Shelley ??? says

Sometimes keeping secrets has unforeseen circumstances.

The Thing About Clare is an emotional rollercoaster with many ups and downs and some surprises along the way. It is a poignant story that is both moving and touching. This is another book I am adding to my keeper shelf and another addition to my top reads for the year. Ms. Clark is a fantastic author who will draw you right in and never let you go.

How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child.

There are many main characters in this book, the four Bliss children and their mother. The pacing is nice and slow which gave me the opportunity to really get to know each of them, to grow to love them and sympathize with what they were going through. While I may not have always liked them, they do have their redeeming moments in little glimpses throughout the story. The build up is very intense and much of the secret is kept hidden for most of the book; which I found really helped in keeping me engaged with the story. I will say though that the book does deal with a few heartbreaking topics, but they are done with compassion and understanding. Imogen Clark really has a unique way of making us relate to her characters in a heart wrenching way.

The thing about Clare was that she just didn't belong.

An amazing, poignant and heart-rending book. This author writes beautiful and from the heart. This is a story I could not put down and one that will stay with me for a very long time. A wonderful, thought provoking take from an author who's writing is beautiful. Very highly recommended.

Thank you NetGalley, Lake Union Publishing, Amazon Publishing UK and Imogen Clark for the opportunity to read this book in exchange for an impartial review; all opinions are my own.

#TheThingAboutClare #NetGalley

All my reviews can be found here: <https://shelleyann01.blogspot.com>

MaryAnn says

The Thing About Clare by Imogen Clark was an okay read with quite a few well rounded characters. Ms. Clark does a great job with characters, descriptions and writing a story that will pull you in, bit by bit.

I did feel that the story dragged a bit and after a certain point just wanted to find out what was going to happen because I'd invested my time and interest, but I didn't care about any of the characters really. I especially found the parents selfish and the "children" (adults in part of the book) all over the map. I also found the siblings rather selfish and self-important. They all loved to talk about Clare, but no one really did anything, especially with River.

There's a lot of family drama here for people who enjoy that and some mystery that is cleared up in the end. Thanks to Netgalley, the publisher and the author for approving my request for an ARC. My thoughts are my own.

DJ Sakata says

Favorite Quotes:

An argument was never very far away from her sister. Even when they were kids, Clare could start a row in an empty room. It was funny how they'd all just grown up into older versions of how were they were as children.

It was barely recognisable as the beautiful cherub in the Bounty Baby pictures that Frank had convinced her to pose for in the early days of motherhood, back before she decided that her child was a test sent to her by the Devil himself. Indignation radiated from the baby's every pore... The baby locked its gaze on to Dorothy's like a heat-seeking missile, paused briefly to fill its lungs with a fresh supply of oxygen and began to scream again. How could something so small cause so much wanton destruction, wondered Dorothy.

Thank the Lord that her own parents hadn't been around to see how Clare was turning out. She could virtually feel the breeze that was coming off her father spinning in his grave.

She'll die an old maid, eating cat food and surrounded by back copies of the Reader's Digest.

She was sixty-five for God's sake. She should lower her expectations a little. Her own mother had considered herself old at this age but she still felt like a young woman. Well, she did in her heart. It was a slightly different story in her knees.

Frank had loved words. They had dripped from his lips like honey from a spoon. Often he spoke as if he were on a stage, his words a performance rather than merely a means of communicating his thoughts.

My Review:

This compelling book was superbly written, cunningly clever, shrewdly paced and packed with sharp wit,

remarkable insights, and observant details. Each complex character inhabited a quirky personality, which was skillfully and enticingly fleshed out. I adored it and didn't want to put it down. I read it slowly and with great delight as I coveted, marveled, and savored every well-chosen word. Imogen Clark is a master scribe; I want to amass and hoard all her clever words.

Every family has secrets and most people are intrinsically drawn and curious to unearth them as other peoples' hidden foibles are so much more interesting and alluring than our own shame, but unfortunately, as you get older, you find there are some secrets you wish you didn't know yet cannot erase or hit delete once you've played Pandora. And every family has at least one walking disaster wastrel - mine has several. But then my family tree is horribly diseased and should be chopped down and burned for good measure. While this captivatingly portrayed family had several drama llamas, Clare was an imposing piece of work. Even in childhood, she had rebelliously pushed every boundary with an abrasive personality, and as an adult, she was simply vile, irresponsible, unpredictably volatile, and increasingly self-destructive. I fervently loathed her with fascination!

In addition to the thrill and privilege of perusing one of my favorite reads for 2018, Ms. Clark also provided me with two new treasures for my Brit Word List with an idiom of "bugger that for a game of soldiers" – for screw this; and bone idle – which Mr. Google informed me was the ultimate of sloth and laziness as it went all the way to the bone. How glorious!

Anne says

I do love a story about families and Imogen Clare has written an extremely readable and enjoyable novel in *The Thing About Clare*; concentrating on four siblings and their parents.

The story begins in 2015, at the funeral of Dorothy, the mother of Anna, Miriam, Clare and Sebastian. Anna has always been the most favoured child; the youngest daughter, the one who was sent out to play rather than be expected to pull her weight with chores. However, Anna now has a heavy burden to bear. Before she died, Dorothy told her to take her Will and a letter addressed to Clare and destroy them, and to tell nobody else.

Of course, like most of us, Anna felt unable to do this and is now privy to long kept secrets that could tear the whole family apart. What should she do?

Imogen Clark takes her readers back to the 1960s when Dorothy is a new mother, coping almost single-handedly with fractious baby Miriam as her husband Frank goes out to work. I especially loved these glimpses back in time where we were able to watch the family grow with each new birth, and see how Dorothy changed as a woman, and a mother.

The author cleverly and carefully moves back and forth to the present day, with viewpoints from each family member, enabling the reader to learn so much more about each character.

The Thing About Clare is a beautifully constructed, intelligently written story of family and secrets. I especially loved the 1970s setting; with memories of punk rock and the Silver Jubilee wonderfully portrayed.

An excellent story about families and how they make us what we are and what we will become.

Written with precision and skill, *The Thing About Clare* is a novel that I found difficult to put down and

would recommend highly.

Kathy Sandlin says

I usually like a good family drama with rich characters. Some characters you may like more than others. I really like the Dorothy but that was about it in this drama. Speaking of drama.....There was really very little drama in the story. It was a long drawn out sibling rivalry that got a little old. The most dramatic part was very easy to see coming and then it fizzled. Thank you to NetGalley for an ARC copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Keirstin Smith (CloudOfThoughts) says

The Thing About Clare by author Imogen Clark is a witty and moving novel about family, secrets and siblings. It follows a complicated bunch of siblings after the death of their mother. Really a great book, definitely one I would recommend.

Thank you Netgalley and the publisher for a copy of The Thing About Clare in exchange for an honest review.

Lori Boyd says

Siblings! Each family has different dynamics, each child has distinct characteristics. Clare has always seemed different than her siblings..Beats to her own drummer. Why?

The writing is excellent, you get a vivid picture of each member of the family And the different dynamics of each within. Unfortunately for me, the story itself was a little flat. Seemed like a long, drawn out story. Could have been summed up in a short story. Ending was disappointing.

Have never read this author but Would try this author again.

Thanks to Publisher and NetGalley for this ARC. Opinion is my own.

Janet Cooke says

This book came to my Fire due to the Giveaway.

I thought that I really enjoyed it, then realized that I enjoyed that I could read it quickly.

The reason for the quick read was the lack of character development of the oldest daughter, and the son. The greatest mention for each of them was a loss... for both a life changing loss neither of which was fleshed out at all.

I find myself wishing that this book was the first in a series, the focus on one relationship and then another.

I guess if books are to be written exactly as I wish I should be an author.

Ceecee says

November's Amazon Kindle First.

I didn't think this was a particularly original book and I found sections of it to be overblown and overlong which became a bit tedious and a lot of it seemed to centre around rather dull food! It's a family dynamic book with a skeleton in the closet of which there are plenty of better books around. The characters were quite interesting - of the four siblings Clare was the most colourful. I particularly enjoyed it when she went through her anarchic punk phase, especially the lengths she went to in order to achieve a Sex Pistols look. GB was in a right old mess at this point with strikes every five minutes and I could totally understand her anti-establishment stance. The father, Frank was likeable, not least because of his use of flowery language. Dorothy, the mother, from an Irish Catholic background was a good character and I liked the way her 'Irishness' shone through in the dialogue. I quite enjoyed recalling some of the events that were incorporated into the families lives from the happiness of our queens Silver Jubilee to the horror of the shootings at the primary school in Dunblane. I confess to skimming the duller bits but on the plus side it was a quick read and free!!

Amber Cowie says

Imogen Clark has a beautiful gift for intricate plotting, elegant language and gentle crafting, revealing her characters so slowly and carefully that it is impossible to do anything as a reader but be mesmerized at how astonishing it is to have them laid bare before your eyes.

I loved this book, like her first, and cannot wait to read the next and the next and the next...

Jo Barton says

Clare Bliss has always been a bit out of step with her three siblings. The complex relationship that they have with each other is further complicated when Anna, one of the older sisters, is entrusted with a secret that their mother has kept from them. What then follows is a cleverly constructed story about the complexity of family relationships and of the difficulties which arise when one of the siblings is thought to be more favoured than the others.

This is an interesting family drama which looks at the dynamics between siblings, especially when one is obviously a very different character to the others. The author writes about complicated family relationships in a very readable way, highlighting the question of nature over nurture and questioning whether it's our upbringing or our genetic makeup which makes us into the people we become.

Moving forwards and backwards in time the story highlights the Bliss family background bringing the four sibling's stories into the spotlight and revealing fascinating details of their lives, both as a family and separately.

The Thing About Clare is a clever family drama, at the heart of which is a story about a devastating secret, which, when revealed, will have repercussions for the whole of the family. The story kept me interested from

start to finish, I especially enjoyed watching how the drama played out within the wider context of the story.
