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Flower

By Irene N. Watts

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Thirteen-year-old Katie is an unwilling summer guest in the Victorian home of her Halifax grandparents. All she wants to do is stay in her attic bedroom and brood. Disgruntled over her new stepmother's pregnancy and how a baby might affect her life, Katie takes refuge in her dreams of playing the part of the disagreeable orphan Mary Lennox in the upcoming school production of *The Secret Garden*.

When Katie sees a shadow on her bedroom wall of an old-fashioned girl holding a flower, she tries to convince herself it is caused by moonlight. But the girl reappears and shares her life with Katie, reaching across the years to her. Is she a ghost? As Katie searches for some tangible evidence of the girl's presence, she discovers a package of letters from World War I containing clues to a bygone time when British orphans were sent to Canada as Home Children.

In this haunting journey of a young girl looking for answers and an orphan girl from the past who tries to provide them, award-winning novelist Irene N. Watts uncovers a tale about the real meaning of family.

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 5-8—Almost a century separates Katie and Lilly but they share many things, including their family. The narrative bounces back and forth between the early 1900s and the present as they tell their stories. Katie, 13, is sent to spend three weeks with her grandparents in their new house in Halifax while her father and stepmother go on a trip. There she meets Lilly, or rather Lilly's ghost, who came to Canada from London in 1907 as one of the many orphans who was shipped across the Atlantic Ocean to be adopted or, more likely, to become indentured servants. During her stay, Katie's grandfather tells her what he knows of the family history. The ghost of Lilly is eventually able to fill in the gaps as it becomes clear that she is Katie's great-grandmother and that she worked in this house as a nanny. After learning of Lilly's hard life, Katie comes to terms with the changes she faces. The main characters are believable, but the supporting cast remains very much on the periphery. Also, readers must closely watch the dates of the chapters as the entire book is told in first person, and the headings are the only clue as to which narrator is talking. Still, this is a good choice for units on Canada at the turn of the century or for those who enjoy historical fiction with a touch of the supernatural.—*Nancy P. Reeder, Heathwood Hall Episcopal School, Columbia, SC*

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From the Inside Flap

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About the Author

Irene N. Watts is a writer, playwright, and drama consultant who has worked throughout Canada and Europe. She is the author of three award-winning novels about the *Kindertransport*, including *Good-bye Marianne*, *Remember Me*, and *Finding Sophie*, which have been published in the United Kingdom and translated into Italian. She also co-edited *Tapestry of Hope: Holocaust Writing for Young People* with Lillian Boraks-Nemetz. Irene N. Watts lives in Vancouver.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Paul Flynn:

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