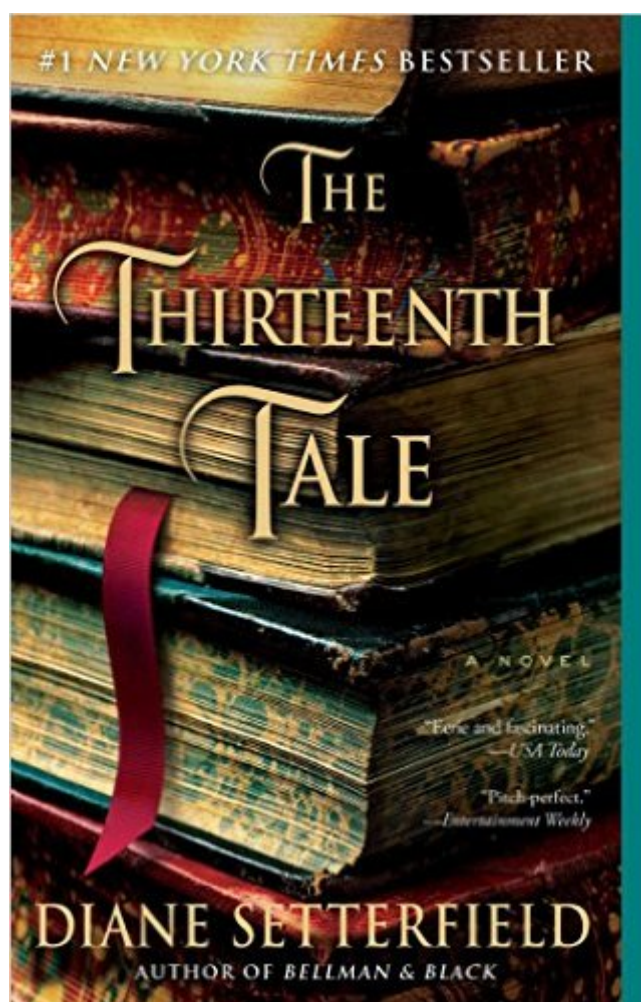


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The Thirteenth Tale: A Novel



Synopsis

Sometimes, when you open the door to the past, what you confront is your destiny. Reclusive author Vida Winter, famous for her collection of twelve enchanting stories, has spent the past six decades penning a series of alternate lives for herself. Now old and ailing, she is ready to reveal the truth about her extraordinary existence and the violent and tragic past she has kept secret for so long. Calling on Margaret Lea, a young biographer troubled by her own painful history, Vida disinters the life she meant to bury for good. Margaret is mesmerized by the author's tale of gothic strangeness -- featuring the beautiful and willful Isabelle, the feral twins Adeline and Emmeline, a ghost, a governess, a topiary garden and a devastating fire. Together, Margaret and Vida confront the ghosts that have haunted them while becoming, finally, transformed by the truth themselves.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (1,886 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

It is a dark and stormy night as I write this. Or, to be more accurate, a dark and stormy morning. The weather reflects the exquisite melancholy that has settled itself upon me at the completion of *The Thirteenth Tale*. Diane Setterfield's debut novel is one of those all-too-rare stories that gets under your skin, that grabs hold of your imagination with both hands and won't let go. I have cherished the reading of this book over the last week. All other books were set aside. When I wasn't reading *The Thirteenth Tale*, I was thinking about it, remembering it. I looked forward to those stolen moments when I might be able to read but a few pages as much as I did those hours that I could devote to the tale. I hung on every word and savored *The Thirteenth Tale* as one would a well-prepared meal. And now it has ended and, contrary to my normal habits I am not anxious to pick up the next story. I

am not yet ready to move on. To put it plainly, *The Thirteenth Tale* was bound to fail. It had to overcome the weight of considerable expectations. It seemed that everywhere I turned prior to its release someone or some thing was inducing me to buy this book. Comparisons to Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* only served to heighten those expectations. And as I stood in the bookstore holding this beautiful volume in my hands (raised letter dust jacket with an image to make a book lover swoon, serrated pages that smelled of new paper and fresh ink, gold embossed designs on the spine of the book itself) my expectations were at a fever pitch. As I read those first pages I was nervous. Diane Setterfield was obviously attempting to speak with the voice of her gothic ancestors a century or more gone. A few of the initial sentences worried me.

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