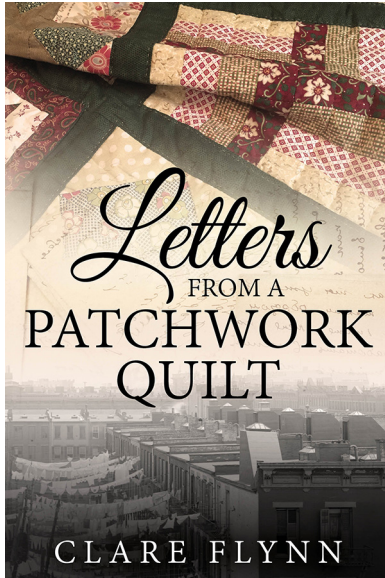


## LETTERS FROM A PATCHWORK QUILT

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**Clare Flynn**

“A story of love, loss and tragedy: a heartbreaking and moving tale” *Readers’ Favorite*. From the author of *A Greater World*



In 1875, 18-year-old would-be poet, Jack Brennan, runs away from home to avoid being pushed into the priesthood. Life looks rosy for Jack when he lands the teaching job he's always dreamed of and meets the love of his life, Eliza Hewlett. But his world is shattered when Mary Ellen, his landlord's daughter, falsely accuses him of fathering the child she is expecting.

Jack and Eliza decide to escape to America. As they are about to sail, Jack is arrested and dragged from the ship, leaving Eliza alone en route to New York with only a few shillings in her pocket. Desperate and helpless, Jack is forced into marrying the woman he despises.

How will Eliza cope alone and penniless in New York? Can Jack make a new life amid the ruins of his hopes and

dreams? Will the lovers meet again?

*Letters from a Patchwork Quilt* has complex and believable characters with human frailties - and a narrative that will keep you turning the pages.

**Clare Flynn** writes **historical fiction with a strong sense of time and place and compelling characters**. Her books often deal with characters who are displaced - forced out of their comfortable lives and familiar surroundings. She is a graduate of Manchester University where she read English Language and Literature.

After a career in international marketing, working on brands from nappies to tinned tuna and living in Paris, Milan, Brussels, London and Sydney, she ran her own consulting business for 15 years and now lives on the Sussex coast where she writes full-time – and can look out of her window and see the sea.



When not writing and reading, Clare loves to paint with watercolours and grabs any opportunity to travel - sometimes under the guise of research.

## Book Club Discussion Questions for Letters from a Patchwork Quilt

**If you want to avoid SPOILERS please read the book first!**

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- How appropriate is the title, Letters from a Patchwork Quilt? Why?
- The book features several English locations - Derby, Bristol and Middlesbrough. How do each of these give you a picture of England at the time of the Industrial Revolution? And two US cities, New York and St Louis. How do these show different pictures of post Civil War America?
- When Jack and Eliza are separated, they both face terrible circumstances. What can we learn about each of them in the way they respond to the hands dealt them? How might they have done things differently? What does this say about their characters?
- The Catholic church features significantly in the book. How do the various representatives of the church differ? Has the author got the balance right in portraying them.
- Which of Jack's problems were of his own making and which were beyond his control?
- Is Mary Ellen a product of her upbringing, her learning difficulties; her abuse or her character? How might Jack have managed his relationship with her differently?
- Jack shows little interest in his children part from Clementina. What does this say about him? How typical is he of a Victorian father?
- Doctor Feigenbaum falls in love with Eliza at first sight. She tells him she loves him after the birth of their first child. How real is her love and would it have survived if Jack had managed to find her again?

## Book Club Discussion Questions for Letters from a Patchwork Quilt

- Why does Jack behave as he does to Gertrude? How guilty is he for her death? How might he have reacted if she had told him she was carrying his child?
- Life in a Victorian industrial town was very tough. How successful is the author in bringing the backstreets of Middlesbrough to life? What would be the worst aspects of living in those times?
- Jack moves from being very anti-alcohol, after witnessing what drink did to his father, to becoming dependent on drink himself. Which factors contributed to this? How much does his relationship with alcohol contribute to his decline?
- If Jack had not succumbed to the temptation of a drink in Liverpool and had managed to sail to America, what would have happened to him? Do you think he would have had any hope of tracing Eliza? How might he have gone about it? Do you think he could have made a new life in America without her?
- If Letters from a Patchwork Quilt were to be made into a movie, who would you cast in the roles of Jack, Eliza, Mary Ellen and Dr Feigenbaum? Drop Clare an email on [clare@clareflynn.co.uk](mailto:clare@clareflynn.co.uk) and tell her your thoughts - and she will reply and tell you who she herself has in mind.

Clare loves hearing from readers so please connect with her on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/authorclareflynn](http://www.facebook.com/authorclareflynn) or Twitter [www.twitter.com/clarefly](http://www.twitter.com/clarefly), or via email [clare@clareflynn.co.uk](mailto:clare@clareflynn.co.uk) .