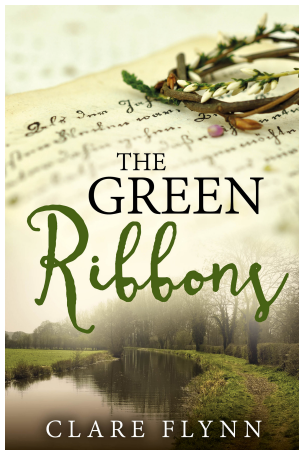


THE GREEN RIBBONS

Clare Flynn

"The story is gritty and realistic and captured me within the first ten minutes and kept its hold throughout." - *Diana Milne, The Review*



How far would she go to save her marriage? How far would he go to keep a promise?

1900. Eighteen-year-old Hephzibah Wildman's world is turned upside down when she loses her parents in a tragic accident. Homeless and destitute, she must leave the security of the Oxford college where her stepfather was Dean, to earn her living as a governess at Ingleton Hall.

Befriending Merritt Nightingale, the local parson and drawn to the handsome Thomas Egdon, she starts to build a new life for herself. When she attracts the unwanted advances of her employer, the country squire, Sir Richard Egdon, she makes the first of two desperate decisions that will change not only her own life but the lives of those around her.

"A beautifully written story of love and heart-break" - *Helena Halme, author*

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.



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

•

- What do the green ribbons of the title symbolise? For Abigail? For Hephzibah?
- The village of Nettlestock is going through changes as a result of depopulation and the impacts of the Industrial Revolution on rural England. How is this evident in the book?
- Hephzibah is orphaned and alone at only eighteen and forced to seek a means of supporting herself. There was little choice for an educated woman in straitened circumstances at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. How well equipped is she for her new career and way of life?
- Hephzibah is swept off her feet by Thomas Egdon and blind to the charms of Merritt Nightingale. If the squire had not attempted to seduce her and caused her to run away might she have eventually come to see these two men differently? Was Thomas's proposal something he came to regret? Did she regret accepting?
- How is it possible that Hephzibah falls deeply in love with Merritt when she had never previously seen him that way? How convinced were you by this change of heart? Have you ever fallen in love with someone after knowing them for a long time?
- Before he dies, Thomas Egdon tells Abigail that he only ever wanted Hephzibah. Do you believe him?
- When Hephzibah discovers the truth about her parents' marriage it is the final impulse for her to try to have a child with Merritt. What does this tell us about her relationships with her mother and with her father and stepfather?

Book Club Discussion Questions for The Green Ribbons

- Which of the characters do you find the most interesting and why?
- Who was your favourite and who was your least appealing character and why?
- What do you think are the themes of the novel?
- Do you like Hephzibah? What do you like/ dislike about her? How might she have acted differently?
- What would you have done if you had been in Hephzibah's shoes? After the death of her parents? When she meets Merritt? When the squire assaults her? When she receives Thomas's proposal? When she suspects Abigail? Do you think she was right to take the desperate measure she does?
- What does The Green Ribbons tell us about class structure in 1900?
- Do you think Hephzibah and Merritt will find happiness in Rome? Are they right for each other?

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