



Sea of Memories

Fiona Valpy

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When Kendra first visits her ailing grandmother, Ella has only one request: that Kendra write her story down, before she forgets...

In 1937, seventeen-year-old Ella's life changes forever when she is sent to spend the summer on the beautiful Île de Ré and meets the charismatic, creative Christophe. They spend the summer together, exploring the island's sandy beaches and crystal-clear waters, and, for the first time in her life, Ella feels truly free.

But the outbreak of war casts everything in a new light. Ella is forced to return to Scotland, where she volunteers for the war effort alongside the dashing Angus. In this new world, Ella feels herself drifting further and further from who she was on the Île de Ré. Can she ever find her way back? And does she want to?

From the windswept Île de Ré to the rugged hills of Scotland, *Sea of Memories* is a spellbinding journey about the power of memory, love and second chances.

Sea of Memories Details

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From Reader Review Sea of Memories for online ebook

Nancy Baker says

Perception is everything. An adult looks at a pebble on the sidewalk and sees just that -- a pebble. A child looks at that same pebble and sees a sizable rock. Another person looking through a magnifying glass looks at that pebble and sees a huge boulder. All perceptions feel right to each person, and as much as their views differ, they are all looking at the same thing. So it is with human relationships. We have an innate ability to read what we want into a conversation, a human gesture or a person's actions.

This was a story of Ella's life - seen from her eyes, seen from her daughter's eyes and seen from her granddaughter's eyes. The story is the same for all, plus or minus a few details, but their perceptions of who Ella is/was all differ. Ella is laying in a nursing home in the much latter part of her life. She has been estranged from her daughter for many years. Her granddaughter visits and Ella asks her to transcribe her recorded life's story. It is a sweet story; it is a sad story; and it is a misunderstood story -- all the same story, but different perceptions. There was much to love and much to learn about Ella's approach to life, happiness and her life's calling.

My favorite paragraph in the book talked about the difference in a parent's love for their child and a spouse's love for their partner. It came fairly early in the story, but it spoke volumes and was the resonating voice throughout the pages that followed.

"The love that you have for your children, that is the only pure and simple kind. It's overwhelming, instinctive, absolute. But it sits alongside the love that you have for your partner, which is another kind of love entirely. That's anything but simple; it's far more complicated; and yet it's the love that we chose, meaning it should really be the easiest one of all, so why do we make it the hardest?"

Renita D'Silva says

I love this author's books - she is one of my favourite authors - and so I was eagerly awaiting this book. And what an amazing read! Gorgeous evocative writing that spills from the page transporting the reader to another place and time. Every character came alive for me and I felt for Ella but my favourites were Finn and Christophe. Another absolutely fabulous story from an incredibly talented author. A spell binding tale that will stay with me for a long time.

caroline Sowersby says

The right time to read a story

I have lost my little brother (He was 75!! but still my little brother) So many things touched me in the book We were brought up in Edinburgh My brother was a patient in Princess Margaret Rose Hospital Lots of things and places spoke to me. He died while I was reading your story this week . I am not sad as I have faith Thank you for your sensitive writing

Cindy Woods says

Four and a half stars!

I loved this book by the end. The last third had me blubbering like a baby! For someone who rarely cries, that's telling!

The story is about an old woman relating her life story to her granddaughter so that she writes a book of her life. Her memories mostly surround the WWII Era in Scotland and France where, as a young woman, she finds love.

I don't want to be spoil the story, but it's a very creative plot.....a heart wrenching, soul shaking story that I found hard to put down after the first quarter of the book. I was a little put off by the multitude of metaphors in the beginning. And I would have liked to have known what Rhona felt at the end.

The pure love that flows between Christophe, Ella and Caroline is beautiful. I would have loved this book cover to have had "the painting" on it, but I guess that's to be left to the reader's imagination. So be it! I loved the book.

I wholeheartedly recommend to readers of romance and historical fiction. A true work of art!

Jacqueline says

I have waited a long time for a new release from Fiona, her previous three novels, set among the Bordeaux vineyards, were great reads so I was initially a little worried about the possibility of disappointment, if this new novel didn't live up to my expectations. Thankfully Sea of Memories, although totally different to her previous books, didn't disappoint in the slightest.

Set partially among the sand dunes and Atlantic coast beaches of the Ile de Ré, just off the coast from La Rochelle, this book also takes us to Paris and Scotland as it covers the years when Europe was torn apart by war and the lives of three young friends Ella, Caroline and Christophe were changed forever. This is a story of love in its many different forms, including grief and pain, and of the realisation of what love truly means, that only comes with age and wisdom. It is so beautifully written you will cry.

Art is a big theme running through this book and we meet artists whose creations are brought to life through Fiona's words, but woven cleverly throughout are also the topics of women at war, the SOE missions into Occupied France, works of art being hidden during the war years, the plight of the Jews, childhood polio, family feuds and autism. This may sound like a lot of things to pack into one book, but it works, as each theme is treated with respect and sensitivity.

I consumed every page, always hungry for more; more of Ella's story set in the past, more from the beautiful Ile de Ré and more of Kendra's story today, as she painstakingly sorts through her grandmother's memories and pieces together a life that is filled with love and loss, all the while living with her own troubled emotions.

Writing this review in those mushy emotional hours that sometimes hit you when you have just finished a great book, I would go so far as to say this book is a work of art in its own right and must be added to your reading list.

Meital Ben-Daniel says

I read Ella's story with a trembling heart...
Do not miss this book!

Shirley Miller says

Kendra reconnects with her grandmother Ella who is in a retirement center near death. She is hoping she can find the reason her mom and her grandmother Ella stopped speaking to each other many years ago, long before Kendra was born. Ella has a story to tell and asks her granddaughter if she will write it. Kendra accepts because she wants answers. Ella's story is pretty amazing . At 17 she went for the summer from Scotland to a beautiful island in France to stay with a longtime friend of her mom's and her 18 year old twins. The trip changed her life forever. The author did an amazing job describing the beautiful island and her connection to the twins. It was easy to understand why at the end of the summer she didn't want to go home. Then the war changed everything. This book really holds your attention. There was the beauty of the island, the carefree days of sailing with her new friends, a new love and then things changed again and again in so many dramatic ways. I gave this 5*'s and want to read other books from this author.

Suze Lavender says

Kendra's grandmother is old and doesn't have long to live anymore, but she has one last wish. She wants Kendra to write down her memories. Kendra has a busy life, being the breadwinner at home and taking care of her autistic son, but she's intrigued by her grandmother's request and decides to give it everything she has. Ella's lead an interesting life and before Kendra knows it she's entirely enthralled by her grandmother's story.

It's 1938 and seventeen-year-old Ella is excited. She's going to France for the summer. On Île de Ré she can improve her French by spending time with twins her own age. She immediately falls in love with Christophe, who teaches Ella about beauty, freedom and art. He's a brilliant artist, but his father has other plans for him. The weeks they have together are glorious and Ella's sad when she has to go home and promises she will return to him next summer, which is exactly what she does. Their time together is precious, as Europe is on the brink of war and Ella has no idea what will happen to them in the future.

Ella can't stay in France and Christophe joins the army. There's no way for them to be together and they lose contact. Ella can't sit still and do nothing, she wants to contribute and joins the WAAF. There she meets Angus, a man who would do anything to keep her safe. Ella's life with Christophe seems like a dream, a memory she will cherish forever and due to the war she will never get it back. She has to move on and look at the future, but will she be able to do it? Can she ever leave Île de Ré and everything it meant behind her?

Sea of Memory is a beautiful poignant story. I was greatly impressed by this deep and multilayered love

story. Because of the war Ella loses the love of her life and this is something she will never completely get over. She isn't complete when she's in Scotland, even though there's a lot of love in her life. Her time on Île de Ré has left a lasting impression. It was truly special and these memories made me smile and brought tears to my eyes at the same time, because there was so much to lose. The war has brought misery and unrest, but there was also bravery, selflessness and community spirit and Fiona Valpy has perfectly translated these subjects into a fantastic story.

Sea of Memory is tragic and sad, but also hopeful and filled with unconditional love, miracles and friendship. It's a bittersweet story that immediately found its way into my heart. Fiona Valpy's gorgeous descriptive writing style makes the story come to life in an amazing way. She effortlessly captures the magic of Île de Ré and I love how she skillfully creates her atmospheres. She combines this with a perfect thorough exploration of emotions. That makes Sea of Memory a terrific heart-rending story, it's a book that will stay with me for a very long time.

Little My says

Whilst I did really enjoy this novel and the descriptions of France I felt in trying to cover the entirety of one person's life meant that the characters became somewhat diluted. At times I felt disappointed that some of the main character's experiences were dealt with in a chapter when they could in fact have been books in their own right. But still a very enjoyable read.

Gail Atkins says

A beautifully written book about love, friendship and relationships.

A dying grandmother asks her granddaughter to write her memoirs of her time in France during the early stages of WW2, in a hope that her estranged daughter would read it and their rift would be healed.

Secrets shared and heartache bond the two women, changing their lives forever.

Katie says

Fiona Valpy is a new author to me but one I'm so glad I've discovered, I absolutely adored this book. I loved the journey we went on with the characters and I just loved the setting. This was the perfect book to read to escape life, I was fully immersed into the story whilst reading.

This book is emotional, have some tissues at the ready when reading! The characters are so beautifully written and I just loved Fiona's writing style. This is a book where you need to dive in and be prepared to ignore everyone and everything until you've read the last page.

I will re-read this book in the future and I'm happy I've discovered Fiona's books - I will devour them in the future!

Bobbi says

I gave this 5 stars and 4 tissues.

This book is about 3 young people that meet in the summer of their 17th year and spend an idyllic time on an island off France. They become friends forever but WWII changes their lives completely... The years that follow are joyful, scary, sad, and sweet.

Greta Halliday says

I picked up this book and did not put it down until the last page had been read. This poignant and beautifully written story really tugs at the heart strings and totally immerses you. It is one of the best books I have read for a while and one that I will be re- reading in the near future. A story of lives, love and loss is a must read., the writing is superb.

Mircina says

Unexpected delight

I was not expecting this to be the wonderful sorry that ice just finished reading. I have fallen in love with Ella and her life story and have already looked up Il de Re as next year's holiday destination. Fantastic beautify written story x

Georgina Roberts says

I loved this book, the descriptions of France were so well written and really took me there. I loved the story, how it goes back and forth to the past and the present day and just everything about the book in general. I even had a few tears at the end which to me is a sign of how much the book has moved me. First book I've read by Fiona and I'll definitely look for more. Five stars
