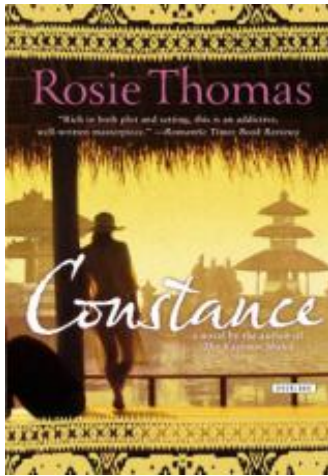


# Constance

by Rosie Thomas

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## About the Book

Over three decades of writing, bestselling novelist Rosie Thomas has earned an untold number of awards and glowing critical praise. Her latest novel, *CONSTANCE*, is a powerful story of a woman's anguished reckoning with her past.

Far away from her home in England --- and a heartbreak she can never truly escape --- Connie has carved out a new life for herself in Bali --- an idyllic place of perfect beaches framed with lush, green trees. When she hears the news that her sister Jeanette is dying, the last thing she wants is to leave her home and return to London. As a child, she was aware only of the differences between herself and her sister. One of them was dark, the other sunny. Yet they both fell in love with the same man.

But with the bitterness of betrayal still between them, the sisters have to learn to forgive each other. Do the bonds of shared childhood lie deeper than they had believed? And, surrounded by family, can Connie make her peace with who she really is --- and who she loves?

## Discussion Guide

1. Throughout her life, Constance is troubled by her confused sense of identity. To what extent does our knowledge of ourselves depend on our knowledge of our own antecedents? of where we came from?
2. Much of *Constance* is concerned with identity. Via the Roxana subplot and the identity theft that takes place in the book, the author tries to show that identity is embedded within us and is not related to status or possessions. Do you think this is successful?

3. Roxana longs to be 'an English girl,' dressing herself in Constance's clothes and pretending to own her London apartment. Is attempting to inhabit a new identity always an unrealistic aim? Or can we transform ourselves if we want it badly enough and try hard enough?

4. Constance reflects that love and hate are so close as to be almost the same thing, and links herself and Jeanette in this light. Do you think this is true of some family relationships, particularly between adolescent siblings like these two?

5. Do think that if they had been mothered more sympathetically, or if Tony had not died prematurely, the sisters' relationship might have been better? Or, given the secrecy surrounding her birth and Constance's probably mixed parentage, was the Thorne family likely to have been troubled from the outset?even if Hilda had been the most enlightened of mothers?

6. Constance does a very bad thing in having an affair with her sister's husband. Can we forgive her in the end, given that Jeanette herself manages to do so?

7. What about Bill? Do you think he did the wrong thing in marrying Jeanette, even though he knew that she was not the sister he truly loved? Or was it the honorable thing to do? Do you think Jeanette's deafness should have influenced his decision?

8. Do Bill and Constance deserve to be happy after Jeanette's death?

9. Another of the book's themes is the contrast between outward appearance and internal character. Jeanette looks sweet and angelic, but is highly driven and determined. Constance looks dark and coldly independent, but she longs for the love of one man and the security of the family that has been denied her. Can appearances often deceive?

10. There is a lot of sound in the book—the noisy frogs, the storm, Constance's music, and above all the Balinese gamelan. Do you think that this underscores the way Jeanette's deafness isolates her? And do we therefore sympathize with Constance because her deeper, crueller isolation is not physical?

11. The author's favourite scene is the one where Constance and Roxana go to the sea together and Roxana dashes into the waves. Do you agree?

## **Author Bio**

Janey King is a British journalist and romance novelist, writing under the pseudonym of Rosie Thomas. Rosie Thomas is the author of numerous critically acclaimed, bestselling novels, and has twice won the Romantic Novel of the Year Award. Born in a small village in northern Wales, Thomas discovered a love of traveling and mountaineering when her children were grown. In the years since, she has climbed in the Alps and the Himalayas, competed in the Peking to Paris car rally, and trekked in the footsteps of Shackleton on South Georgia Island.

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