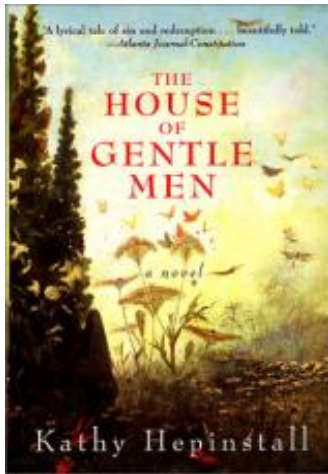


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# The House of Gentle Men: A Novel

by Kathy Hepinstall

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## About the Book

In a year of war, sixteen-year-old Charlotte sets off on a mission of love in the backwoods of Louisiana, only to be violated by three soldiers in a lonely section of the forest. Charlotte's young life is destroyed, but another life is growing inside her. Years later, in peacetime, Charlotte comes to House of Gentle Men, a mysterious sanctuary where sad, damaged women are administered to by haunted men wishing to atone for their past crimes. Here, Charlotte falls in love with one of the Gentle Men, a tormented young soldier with a terrible secret of his own.

An artistic triumph of the highest order, this debut is a transcendent tale of salvation that celebrates the strength of the heart.

## Discussion Guide

1. Would you describe the tone of the novel as "fablelike"? If not, how would you describe it? If so, what narrative techniques were used to accomplish this? Was it effective?
2. **The House of Gentle Men** is rich with symbolism. Discuss the use of symbolism in the novel and cite examples.
3. Do you think that the women and men in the novel were too clearly depicted as being either victims or victimizers? Why or why not?
4. Sexual intercourse is not allowed in **The House of Gentle Men**. Are there any positive portrayals of sexual relationships? Why or why not?

5. Do you think that all sins are deserving of forgiveness? Were you surprised that Charlotte forgave Justin? Did you want her to? Did you empathize with Justin?

6. Mr. Olen founded the House of Gentle Men in order to atone for the sin of neglecting his wife. In light of this fact, why is his relationship with his daughter and son ironic?

7. Compare and contrast Milo and Charlotte's relationship with Louise and Benjamin's relationship. How did these siblings help each other to heal?

8. Were you surprised by the way the novel ended? Do you think that Justin, Charlotte, Daniel and Milo survived? Would it have been possible for them to lead a normal life together?

## Author Bio

Kathy Hepinstall grew up in Spring, Texas, near the Louisiana border. Polly is based, in part, on Kathy's own mother, who has as wicked a tongue as her fictional counterpart. Kathy now lives in Portland, Oregon, and Santa Barbara, California.

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