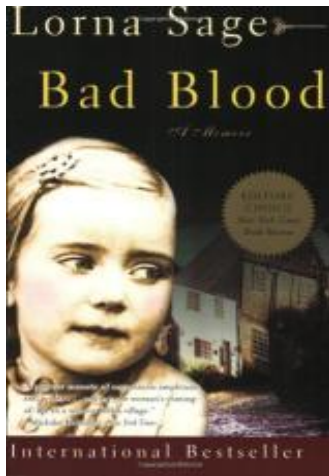


Bad Blood: A Memoir

by Lorna Sage



About the Book

Lorna Sage's adventure in autobiography is a searing and funny anatomy of three marriages that brings to life her girlhood in postwar provincial Britain. Her early childhood was dominated by her brilliant, bitter grandfather, a drinker, a womanizer, a vicar, exiled to a remote village on the Welsh borders. His wife loathed him, lived on memories, and shook her fist at any parishioner bold enough to call at the house. From the vicarage Lorna watched the fading away of the old world and the slow dissolve of her grandparents' disastrous Union.

Then her father returns from the army and she moves with her parents and baby brother into a newly built house. Living with her parents, she quickly learns that the world is full of secrets and myths that mark her family -- her mother's thwarted dreams, her father's addiction to work, and the mysterious emotional economy of their proper marriage. Longing to leave, Lorna vows she will never marry or have children, but before long she finds herself having grown up far too fast.

From the memories of her family and of the wounds they inflicted on one another, she tells an extraordinary tale of thwarted love, failed religion, and the salvation she found in books. As a portrait of a family and a young girl's place in it, it is unsurpassed.

Discussion Guide

1. *'He got so impatient with my favourite books that one momentous day, before I was four, he taught me to read in self-defence. This confirmed me as his creature.'* Assess the different ways in which Lorna became her grandfather's creature, and the way in which he continued to influence her after his death.
2. Discuss the role that books and reading came to play in Lorna's life.

3. Compare and contrast the atmosphere in the three family homes in **Bad Blood**: the Vicarage; no. 4, The Arowry; and Sunnyside.

4. *'Hammer was a most picturesque place from a certain distance, but close up its substance was heavy and strange.'* Discuss Lorna's relationship with her hometown.

5. What can we learn about post-war England from Lorna's experiences in **Bad Blood**.

6. Amongst other things, **Bad Blood** is a vivid anatomy of three marriages; Lorna's maternal grandparents; her parents; and her own, with Vic Sage. Discuss the very real differences between these three marriages.

7. *'The magic of the Church no longer impressed us. Our own bodies were more mysterious than the wine and wafers?'* Discuss the changing role of religion in Lorna's life through **Bad Blood**.

8. *'She and I now formed a kind of miniature generation ourselves, we were furiously impatient to be teenagers.'* Discuss Lorna's friendship with Gail and their experiences in adolescence.

9. Rachel Cusk, reviewing in the *London Evening Standard*, suggested that *'this "memoir" has all the qualities of fiction.'* Discuss the ways in which Lorna Sage achieves this in her writing.

Author Bio

Lorna Sage was professor of English at the University of East Anglia and twice dean of the faculty. She regularly reviewed for the *Observer*, *London Review of Books*, *Times Literary Supplement* and *New York Times Book Review*. Her previous books include *Women in the House of Fiction* (1992), *The Cambridge Guide to Women's Writing in English* (1999) and a short monograph on Angela Carter. **Bad Blood** won the 2000 Whitbread Biography Award and the J.R.Ackerley Prize at the International Pen Awards in 2001. She died in January 2001.

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