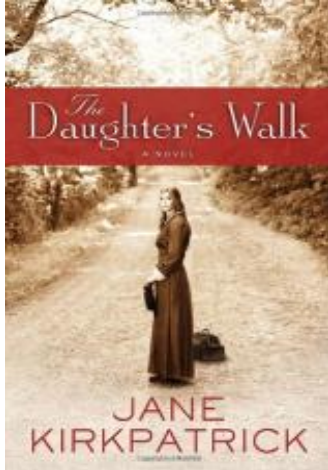

The Daughter's Walk

by Jane Kirkpatrick



About the Book

A mother's tragedy, a daughter's desire and the 7,000 mile journey that changed their lives.

In 1896 Norwegian American Helga Estby accepted a wager from the fashion industry to walk from Spokane, Washington to New York City within seven months in an effort to earn \$10,000. Bringing along her 19-year-old daughter Clara, the two made their way on the 3,500-mile trek by following the railroad tracks and motivated by the money they needed to save the family farm. After returning home to the Estby farm more than a year later, Clara chose to walk on alone by leaving the family and changing her name. Her decisions initiated a more than 20-year separation from the only life she had known.

Historical fiction writer Jane Kirkpatrick picks up where the fact of the Estbys' walk leaves off to explore Clara's continued journey. What motivated Clara to take such a risk in an era when many women struggled with the issues of rights and independence? And what personal revelations brought Clara to the end of her lonely road? **The Daughter's Walk** weaves personal history and fiction together to invite readers to consider their own journeys and family separations, to help determine what exile and forgiveness are truly about.

Discussion Guide

1. Clara says she doesn't want to go on this trip her mother has arranged to walk from Spokane to New York City. Why do you think she didn't simply say she wouldn't go? Why do you think she agreed?
2. Why did Helga want to make the walk to New York? Were her stated reasons her real reasons?

3. Marcel Proust writes, "The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in seeing with new eyes." At what point did Clara begin to see her mother with new eyes? When did she see herself differently?
4. Clara is critical of her mother's poor planning, her side trips, and her trust in the sponsors. Yet later on, she accepts money from the very people who were part of the disastrous outcome of the journey. What allowed Clara to accept their assistance? Do you think the money was "dirty money"? Should Clara have given it back?
5. Did Clara get sent into exile, or did she exile herself by her choices?
6. Can one make gains, "occupy," and expand gifts and talents financially or emotionally without some risk? Did Clara find a way to invest in her life without risk? Why did she resist Franklin's attempts to court her? Did she see life as Louise said she did, as though she "didn't deserve a full plate"? Why or why not?
7. What was Clara seeking when she went to Manistee, Michigan? Did she find it? How did the conversation with John Doré affect her understanding of family, if at all?
8. Ida is portrayed as an angry woman, and yet her mother tells Clara she is grateful to her children, including Ida, despite their insistence that she never speak about the walk to New York. In later life, Ida and Clara live together. What do you know about Ida and Clara that makes this end possible? Is it realistic? What had to change for Ida to accept Clara back into her definition of family?
9. Why is it so difficult at times to hear the Voice telling us, "This is the way, walk in it"? Did Clara listen to that voice through the years? When didn't she? And what were the consequences?
10. Acts of living contain risk, and risking for family can bring both great joy and great sorrow. How did Clara deal with her times of overt family rejection such as Ida's and her stepfather's rebuffs? How did her mother deal with it? Did the two women follow similar paths, or were their journeys very different from each other? In what ways?
11. Franklin tells Clara that family means "servant." Do you agree with this statement? Who was Clara's family? With biological families often spread around the country, how do you define family today?
12. What did Clara eventually regain by reconciling with her family of origin?
13. What are your thoughts about the silencing Ole imposed on Helga? Do you agree with Clara that we are asked to "tell the stories" and that they each belong to us?
14. Are there stories within your family that have been silenced? Do you see ways in which the silencing has harmed or strengthened the people involved?
15. What prevents you from writing your story down?

Author Bio

Jane Kirkpatrick is the *New York Times* and CBA bestselling author of more than 25 books, including *A SWEETNESS TO THE SOUL*, which won the coveted Wrangler Award from the Western Heritage Center. Her works have been finalists for the Christy Award, Spur Award, Oregon Book Award, and Reader's Choice awards, and have won the WILLA Literary Award and Carol Award for Historical Fiction. Many of her titles have been Book of the Month and Literary Guild selections. You can also read her work in more than 50 publications, including *Decision*, *Private Pilot*, and *Daily Guideposts*. Jane lives in Central Oregon with her husband, Jerry.

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