

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



A #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of eight novels, including *The Exiles*, *Orphan Train*, and *A Piece of the World*, Christina Baker Kline is published in 40 countries. Her novels have received the New England Prize for Fiction, the Maine Literary Award, and a Barnes & Noble Discover Award, among other prizes, and have been chosen by hundreds of communities, universities and schools as “One Book, One Read” selections. Her essays, articles, and reviews have appeared in publications such as the *New York Times* and the *NYT Book Review*, *The Boston Globe*, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, *LitHub*, *Psychology Today*, and *Slate*.

Kline was born in Cambridge, England, and raised there as well as in the American South and Maine. She is a graduate of Yale, Cambridge, and the University of Virginia, where she was a Henry Hoyns Fellow in Fiction Writing. She has taught fiction and nonfiction writing, poetry, English literature, literary theory, and women’s studies at Yale, NYU, and the University of Virginia, and served as Writer-in-Residence at Fordham University for four years. She is a recipient of several Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation Fellowships and Writer-in-Residence Fellowships at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. Kline lives in New York City and Southwest Harbor, Maine with her husband, David Kline. They are the parents of three sons, Hayden, Will, and Eli.

[christinabakerkline.com](http://christinabakerkline.com)

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Were you familiar with this part of Australia's history before reading? Was there anything new you learned that particularly surprised you?
2. Mathinna and Evangeline are both orphans, and Hazel has a difficult relationship with her mother. What impact does this have on their characters, and how do you think their stories would have been different if their families were still alive?
3. Compare the different treatments of male and female convicts aboard the *Medea*. Though the male convicts are also being punished, they are still in a position of authority over the female prisoners. What does this say about British society in the 1800s?
4. The Franklins make Mathinna feel like she doesn't belong in Hobart Town, yet Mrs. Wilson tells Mathinna that they are the ones who don't belong. What does it mean to belong to a place? Who decides who does and does

not belong?

5. Were you surprised by Evangeline's fate? Why or why not?
6. What is the significance of Mathinna losing her language? Of all the ways she changes after leaving Flinders, why does this loss feel the most important to her, and mark such a clear divide from her old life?
7. Throughout the book, multiple characters reference and find comfort in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. If you've read *The Tempest*, why do you think the author chose this play in particular? What connections and common themes does it share with *The Exiles*?
8. At one point, Mathinna thinks to herself, "She was tired of feeling as if she lived between worlds. This was the world she lived in now." In what way does Van Diemen's Land act as a "between world" for the different characters? How do they each struggle with leaving behind their old lives and adapting to new ones?
9. Do you think Hazel really could have forgiven Buck if he had let her? Would you have been able to forgive him after everything he did?
10. Ruby thinks about her "many mothers," and how each played a key role in taking care of her and making her the person she became. What role do found families, and found mothers in particular, play throughout the story?
11. Dr. Garrett reflects on the privileges granted the residents of Van Diemen's Land, saying, "It is my sense that, despite its hardships and limitations, living in a new world accords one certain freedoms. Social hierarchies are not as rigidly enforced." In what ways is this both true and not true for each of the characters in *The Exiles*? What are the limitations of these freedoms – which characters are allowed them, and why are others excluded?
12. What connections do you see between the historical world of *The Exiles* and today?

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## BOOK REVIEWS

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### Booklist

In 1840, Mathinna, the orphaned daughter of an Aboriginal chief, is adopted by the governor's wife in Hobart City in what is now Tasmania. Though the story revisits Mathinna, the focus shifts to England, where Evangeline Stokes has been wrongfully accused of theft and sentenced to transport. Her long, harsh trip is complicated by her pregnancy, though it is lightened somewhat by friendship with brash, also-pregnant Olive; Hazel, who has midwifery skills; and the sympathetic ship's surgeon. Then tragedy strikes, and by the time they arrive at the prison, Hazel is posing as the mother of Ruby, Evangeline's daughter. As in *Orphan Train* (2013), Kline deftly balances tragedy and pathos, making happy endings hard-earned and satisfying. Mathinna does not fare so well here, nor did her real-life counterpart, but the fact that even her sad, untimely ending does not receive the imaginative treatment of the other characters'

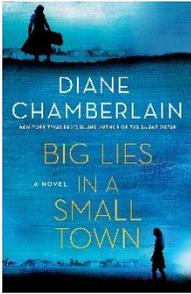
stories makes her inclusion confusing, if not cruel. Still, book groups will find much to discuss, such as the uses of education, both formal and informal, in this moving work of historical women's fiction. -- Susan Maguire (Reviewed 7/1/2020) (*Booklist*, vol 116, number 21, p26)

### **Publisher's Weekly**

In the gripping latest from Kline (*Orphan Train*), three women try to carve out lives in mid-19th-century colonial Australia. Aborigine Matthina is eight years old when she's seen by the wife of the governor of an English settlement on a visit to her home island, Wybalenna. After learning Matthina can speak English, the woman decides to take her back to Flinders in southern Australia as a curiosity and an experiment in forced civilization. Meanwhile, in London, Evangeline is the orphaned daughter of a vicar working as a governess to the children of a wealthy family. But after Evangeline is seduced by the family's eldest son and her secret pregnancy is discovered, she is arrested, held in Newgate prison, and sentenced to transport to the penal colonies of Australia. She shares the voyage to her new life with Hazel, the hardscrabble daughter of a midwife who turns her knowledge of medicine into an asset aboard the ship. The narratives converge when their ship docks in Van Diemen's Land (modern-day Tasmania), where Matthina, who has been adopted by the island's governor, now lives. The women, all brought to their new lives against their wills, become a lens through which to see the development of colonial Australia. Filled with surprising twists, empathetic prose, and revealing historical details, Kline's resonant, powerful story will please any historical fiction fan. (Sept.) --Staff (Reviewed 07/20/2020) (*Publishers Weekly*, vol 267, issue 29, p)

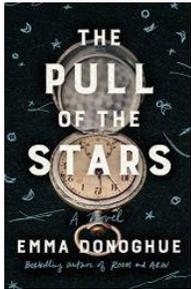
## READALIKES

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### ***Big Lies in a Small Town* by Diane Chamberlain**

A debut based on the true story of the 1841 transport ship *Rajah* follows the experiences of a crew of Englishwomen convicts, sentenced to a distant penal colony for petty crimes, who realize that a killer is among them.



### ***The Pull of the Stars* by Emma Donoghue**

A novel set in 1918 Dublin offers a three-day look at a maternity ward during the height of the Great Flu pandemic.



### ***The Lieutenant* by Kate Grenville**

In 1787 Lieutenant Thomas Rooke, officer and astronomer, sets sail from Portsmouth with the First Fleet and its cargo of convicts destined for New South Wales. As the newcomers struggle to establish a settlement, Rooke comes to know the aboriginal people and forges a remarkable connection with one child which will change his life in ways he never imagined. Based on real events.