

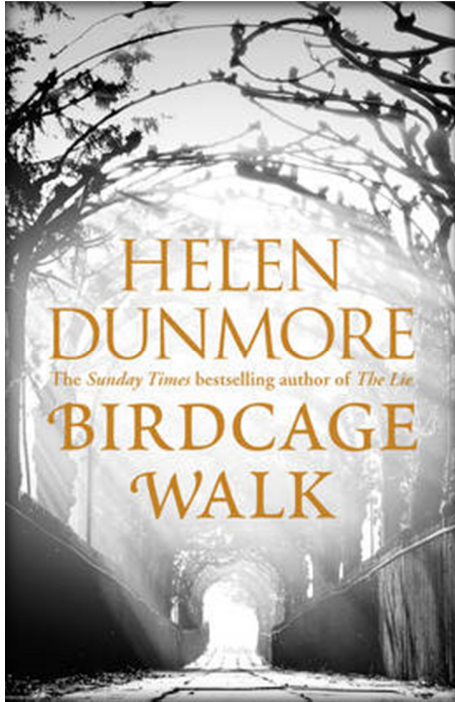


Helping you choose
your next book



LoveReading Reader reviews of **Bird Cage Walk** by Helen Dunmore

Below are the complete reviews, written by LoveReading members.



Elaine Lowe

Beautifully descriptive, you feel totally immersed in that particular time and place.

Once again Helen Dunmore's novel succeeds in taking the reader back to a bygone era. Beautifully descriptive in location and character, it depicts a young girl's naivety and her transition to a woman following her marriage to a driven property developer who is a cold, jealous man.

This isn't a fast pace page turner but an enjoyable gentle read nevertheless.

Maureen Gourlay

The French Revolution is the backdrop for 'Birdcage Walk' but for Lizzie living in Bristol with her architect husband, it will affect her life more than she could imagine, and she could lose everything.

It is 1792 and Lizzie has married a widower who has grand ideas of building new houses overlooking the Gorge at Clifton. As her family, who themselves are Radicals, follow the upheavals of the French Revolution, with firsthand information from friends in Paris, they cannot know how this will affect Lizzie's husband's dreams and plans and subsequently his and Lizzie's livelihood. While hearing of the Terror across the Channel Lizzie finds that there are terrors she is uncovering at home that might mean she could lose everything including her life. This was an interesting story set in Bristol that was a bit different from the "norm". Helen Dunmore writes very descriptively and it was an easy and entertaining read.

Glenda Worth

'Birdcage Walk' an interesting read, is set in a time when there was political unrest. Lizzie has to deal with abuse from her husband as his business fails. Great talent for description.

'Birdcage Walk' by Helen Dunmore is a novel set in Bath during a time of political upheaval. It deals with the monarchy of the time, and the undercurrents of anarchy both in France and in England.

Lizzie is married to Diner who is in the building trade trying to prosper by building houses at a time when there is much unrest. At first he was successful but as times become hard generally, his business begins to fail, and instead of reigning in his spending and building he ploughs on regardless. In the meantime Lizzie is trying to cope with the problems of putting food on the table, dealing with an increasingly bullying husband and attending her mother who is pregnant/ill.

Helen Dunmore writes in such a way that she draws you in, and keeps you there until you finish the book. She is very adept at setting the scene so that it seems real while keeping the characters moving along in their storyline.

An interesting read depicting that period of history and the abuse that went on behind closed doors, it kept me up until 3am this morning reading until the end!

Celia Cohen

An excellent page turner, beautifully written.

Helen Dunmore is a superb writer. She draws you into her characters. I almost felt I was Lizzie and I was living during those turbulent times. This book certainly kept you reading and left you wanting more which is always a good sign.

Sandra Rabiasz

Another Helen Dunmore winner.

It's the late seventeenth century and Elizabeth, Lizzie, Fawkes is married to John Diner Tredevent, and they could not be more different. Lizzie is the daughter of a noted radical writer and grew up in an atmosphere of impassioned politics and determined equality for all. Diner is a practical man with no time for such views - he wants stability, control and wealth. Lizzie's choice of husband is not approved by her beloved mother and extended circle

but the right to make her own choice is paramount and Lizzie has her way. So, why then, is she not happy?

This is the story of her relationship with Diner and the secret that lies at its heart. Lizzie's dawning sense of fear and gradual isolation are hypnotic and you are completely drawn in as your own sense of unease increases. The conclusion of the story does not neatly tie up all loose ends and, without any plot spoilers, leaves you wondering what the ultimate outcome for Lizzie will be. On this occasion ambiguity works. I really like Helen Dunmore's books and thoroughly recommend this one.

Angie Rhodes

Helen is one of those writers who can pick up a pen and write about anything, from ghost stories, to spy novels, and this time, with 'Birdcage Walk', she has for me, m upped it,

Set in 1792, Lizzie Fawkes has met and married property developer John Diner Tredevant, who has Bristol in his sights and being heavily involved in building his dream, magnificent terrace, the like, Bristol has never seen! Where? Above the two hundred foot gorge, and nobody will stand in his way!

Lizzie has her fears, as much as she loves Diner, there is something dark, something in his past he won't talk about and now the night sweats and shaking have started. What is it, he is hiding? What happened to his first wife? He has never said.

With a wonderful Gothic feel, the type that has you wanting to turn the pages, and has you forgetting the cuppa, you have just made!

Judith Waring

This book was engaging right from the start and my first observation was one of surprise when I discovered the narrator of the prologue was a man! In my head I had conjured up a female.

However, having now finished the book I find myself querying what the actual point of the prologue was in the book as this narrator doesn't appear again nor have any other purpose - as he might have had in 'tying' up the threads of the story at the end - and the novel is certainly strong enough to stand alone from the first chapter without it.

My second observation as I started to read the actual storyline was that it

brought to mind 'A Respectable Trade' by Philippa Gregory, being set in Bristol too and loosely based around a similar theme of a successful life which then is on a downturn, and set in the same area of the city albeit at a different point in time.

Helen Dunmore writes a very measured and well observed narrative from Lizzie's point of view and yet every sentence is so well constructed that there was no need for additional words to pad it out. It is very descriptive of life in the late eighteenth century and I'm very glad I didn't live then. I have to say it was a much more enjoyable story than what I initially thought it would be when I first read the synopsis.

Lizzie's love for her mother was beautifully tangible that I found myself underlining whole paragraphs, indeed pages, of the loss Lizzie feels when her mother dies and the emotional tie that continues; it was such a descriptive section of the book that I really engaged with it.

I did however struggle to find an emotional attachment between Lizzie and Diner, regardless of the fact we know she loved him so strongly and wanted to be with, and married to, him that she ignored other people's feelings about him but bar the few times when they lose themselves in their lovemaking I felt that she was always on edge with her husband right from the start.

Jillian McFrederick

Slightly disappointed by this from Helen Dunmore. It started well when an intriguing inscription on a gravestone refers to a pamphleteer from the late 1700s leading the narrator to investigate into the identity of those named on the gravestone.

The narrative skips back to that era introducing us to a group of radical thinkers with connections to supporters of the French Revolution. But the story gravitates round a young woman called Lizzie whose husband has a mysterious past and who is working day and night as a building developer to make his business prosper despite the economic downturn due to the political turmoil of the time. There is a lacking in detail about anything other than the main characters who as a result seemed to live in a vacuum. I feel that the story lacks any depth concentrating as it does on Lizzie and Divers relationship. In some ways all the mystery surrounding his background is a bit of a non-story whereas I would have liked to know more about Lizzie's mother and stepfather's life and history.

Also it would have benefitted the story to return again to the modern era with some evidence of the impact that the radicals and their pamphlets had had on the subsequent events in history.

Nevertheless it is well told in true Helen Dunmore style though this would not be my favourite of her novels.

Judith Sharp

A novel on the theme of how love can destroys us and the helplessness of women at this time in history.

Lizzie Fawkes marries John Diner Tredevent, a property developer. However, the French Revolution and the uncertainty it generates puts a strain on his business. Also he is a jealous man and Lizzie who has grown up in a radical environment becomes more and more aware of just how much independence she has given up and how as a wife she has no standing in law and the customs of the time.

Helen Dumore has a solid reputation as a novelist and although I don't think this is one of her best works, it is very readable.

Sarah Musk

A tense, well written book about an abusive marriage set in late eighteenth century Bristol.

This is quite a sinister, scary book. The reader has knowledge from the beginning about one the main characters which the people in the book do not have and this makes it a tense read.

The story is set in late eighteenth century Bristol where the mood and economic instability of the times are very affected by the French Revolution occurring over the channel not so far away. It was a time when people feared the spirit of revolution would spread to Great Britain - some people even welcomed it. The uncertainties of the time affect business confidence in the city and this causes financial difficulties for John Diner who is in the building trade. He is building fine houses but cannot sell them.

John Diner is a controlling, possessive husband who is jealous of his wife Lizzie's family. As his financial situation worsens he becomes even more darkly possessive and his wife begins to become afraid of him. It is a story of mental and emotional abuse in a marriage and could be set at any time.

Helen Dunmore conveys brilliantly the gradual breakdown in trust between the two and Lizzie's growing fears and suspicions about her husband. He is a frightening man, very unpredictable and as you read the book the claustrophobic tension in the house is almost palpable. I really enjoyed the book - it is finely written if a bit so scary at times - you want to shout 'look behind you!'

Sue Broom

One of the strengths of Helen Dunmore's writing that I most admire is the way she creates atmosphere and this latest novel shows this to perfection. It is set against the backdrop of the French Revolution and its effect on Britain - economic uncertainty and the prospect of war. The tension of the political and social scene is mirrored in the taut, fragile relationship between Lizzie and her husband, a property developer teetering on the edge of bankruptcy and mental breakdown, a man whose values are completely at odds with her family of revolutionary sympathisers. I felt as though I was treading on eggshells with her as she tries to negotiate her way between them. Added to this is Lizzie's unease in her position as second wife, wondering whether she can match up to her predecessor who died unexpectedly and remains a mystery to her.

A tense, atmospheric thriller from one of my favourite writers - highly recommended.

Edel Waugh

*The story is set in the 1700's in England and is based around a young woman called Lizzie and her businessman husband called Diner. Diner is a strange man, moody and possessive and you had to wonder what Lizzie sees in him, but they do have a physical attraction to one another that links them. Lizzie has a strength to her that she very likely got from her very smart mother, she is very likeable character with great empathy. Diner is the complete opposite of her, he comes across as a dark and dangerous soul with a mysterious past and there is an unease that lingers on every page as you read like an impending sense of doom. **I loved this story, I was never quite sure where it was going to lead me but it was well worth the journey! I recommend this book to all.***

Ruth Windeler

Charming read set in Bristol in the year 1792. The descriptive writing is so utterly convincing to all the senses, that you are transported in time to each and every scene.

This is a very charming read set in Bristol in the year 1792. The descriptive writing is so utterly convincing to all the senses, that you are transported in time with each and every scene.

An historical novel with an air of mystery and element of the dark side of humanity. Beautifully written and a unique on its own.

Very different from my usual page turners, but thoroughly enjoyed never the less.

Catherine Price

Helen Dunmore's elegant prose brings the past to life, linking revolutionary Paris to the lives and fates of a Bristol family, striving to rationalise and prosper in a tumultuous world.

*Bristol in 1792, and newly-married Lizzie strives to adapt to her new life, at the same time as the news of the French Revolution creates instability and upheaval within the city. Helen Dunmore can write as evocatively about the domestic horrors of childbirth at that time as she does about the city's property developers as they desperately try to recoup their investments in a failing market. This is a novel about the consequences of suppressed secrets, and the dangers of following your heart with a man you barely know, until it is far too late. **Carefully observed and elegantly written, this novel unsettles and intrigues to the final page.***

Jacki Moorcroft

Helen Dunmore is a wonderful story teller whose characters ooze quality. Her beautiful writing ensures that you become enthralled with the characters and fearful for what appears to be the only outcome.

Set in Bristol in 1792, Helen Dunmore explores England at the time of the French revolution, from the view of Lizzie Hawkes. Lizzie was raised by her radical mother and step-father to be independent. They are heavily into the revolution and devour all reports from Paris. However Lizzie has recently married John Diner Tredevant who is a property developer who is watching his

business fall into ruin as the british aristocracy falls into panic that the same fate awaits them here as in France. "Diner"s obsession with everything that Lizzie does and thinks is dragging her down and she is loathed to be subdued but at the same time loves him deeply. Helen Dunmore is a wonderful story teller whose characters ooze quality and have real life turmoil. Her beautiful writing ensures that you become enthralled with their lives and fearful for what appears to be the only outcome.

You can follow Jacki on Twitter: @moorcoftj

Dana Captainino

As with all her books Helen Dunmore's research and telling of her story provides us with an insight into a world most of us will not have considered before.

'Birdcage Walk' is set in 1792 when Europe and in particular France are undergoing great political upheaval. This turmoil has direct impact on the housing boom of late 18th century Bristol.

As with all her books Helen Dunmore's research and telling of her story provides us with an insight into a world not considered before.

John Diner Tredevant is a property developer set on building an amazing state of the art terrace above the Gorge. Initially his plans are going well and the row of luxury houses begin to take shape. But as the imminent threat of war and social unrest increases across Europe the market collapses and he is left with creditors hassling him for funds and is forced to abandon the project in the most spectacular way.

While John's plans progress he also courts and marries Lizzie Fawkes who was born into a Radical background where her mother was a renowned Radical thinker and writer. She encouraged her daughter to question and value her independence. Unfortunately, for Lizzie John Diner's view on the rights of women, especially in marriage were rather different. He believe she belongs to him and only he has the right to demand how she lives.

What begins as a passionate and reasonably accepting relationship grows darker mirroring the fate of his building project. Lizzie finds herself in an increasingly dangerous and violent situation where her moves are monitored closely.

This novel makes for bleak reading and the relentless gloom makes it far from relaxing.