



# The Exiles



## About the Author:

Christina Baker Kline is the New York Times bestselling author of eight novels, including *The Exiles*, *Orphan Train*, and *A Piece of the World*. 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 lives in New York City and Maine with her family.

## Inside the kit:

- (8) copies of the book
- (1) book club guide

## About the Book:

(from Goodreads)

Seduced by her employer’s son, Evangeline, a naïve young governess in early nineteenth-century London, is discharged when her pregnancy is discovered and sent to the notorious Newgate Prison. After months in the fetid, overcrowded jail, she learns she is sentenced to a penal colony in Australia.

During the journey, Evangeline strikes up a friendship with Hazel, a girl who was sentenced to seven years transport for stealing a silver spoon. Canny where Evangeline is guileless, Hazel—a skilled midwife and herbalist—is soon offering home remedies to both prisoners and sailors in return for a variety of favors.

By the time the *Medea* arrives, many of the Aboriginal people have been forcibly relocated, their land seized by white British colonists. One of these relocated people is Mathinna, the orphaned daughter of the Chief of the Lowreenne tribe, who has been adopted by the new governor of Van Diemen’s Land.

In this novel, Christina Baker Kline brilliantly recreates the beginnings of a new society in a beautiful and challenging land, telling the story of Australia from a fresh perspective, through the experiences three women.

## Suggested Reads:

*Dangerous Women* by Hope Adams

*Rush Oh!* by Shirley Barrett

*Morgan's Run* by Colleen McCullough



# The Exiles

1. Talk about the reasons Evangeline is first sent to prison and then to the penal colony of Australia. How does her treatment reflect the stature of women in the 1840s--particularly in what was then considered to be the most civilized country in the world?
2. In an outward show of grace and charity, Lady Franklin has adopted Mathinna, a young Aboriginal girl. What is Lady Franklin's actual purpose in bringing Mathinna into her household? What are her true feelings toward Australia's indigenous peoples?
3. All good historical fiction engages us with real history: it brings the past alive and puts it in the context of living (albeit fictional) human beings--and so we learn. What did you learn about the settlement of Australia that you hadn't known previously?
4. 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?
5. 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?
6. Ruby thinks about her "many mothers" and how each played a key role in taking care of her and making her the person she become. What role do found families, and found mothers in particular, play throughout the story?
7. 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?
8. 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?