

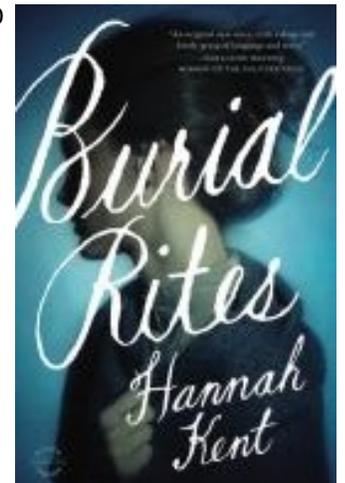


Burial Rites

Hannah Kent

Discussion Questions

1. What do you make of the historical documents (both real and fictionalized) that begin each chapter? How did these change or aid your understanding of Agnes's story?
2. Agnes often comments on the ways in which she has been silenced, or had her story altered by the authorities. Why do you think she has such an anguished relationship to language?
3. Fate and destiny are major themes in this novel, for Agnes seems fated to have come to the end she does. Could she have escaped this destiny? Was there a turning point in her life that she might have avoided?
4. Are Steina, Lauga and Margret changed by Agnes's time with them? Has her fate changed theirs in any way?
5. Death is a major theme in this novel, but it is also about life and living. When Agnes faces the day of her execution all she wants to do is live, despite the harrowing nature of the life she has endured. Discuss.
6. Blondal is the real villain of this piece. His dispassionate communications with those whom he controls are filled with venom and spite. What did you make of his decision to lodge Agnes with District Officer Jon and his family? What do you believe happened at Stora—Borg that caused Blondal to move Agnes to Kornsa?
7. Toti's interest in Agnes's case begins as a young cleric wanting to prove himself to his elders, to a sincere desire to defend a condemned woman. His growth in compassion and his readiness to stand up to his seniors is one of the most significant themes in this novel. Discuss.
8. Agnes goes to her death holding Toti's hand, for they have discovered a deep need for each other. Is this story ultimately about the loneliness of our end in life? Or does it celebrate the comfort that a person can bring to the dying? Discuss.
9. Hannah Kent calls her novel a "dark love letter to Iceland" in her Acknowledgements. What does she mean by this? Did you read the novel in this way?





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About the Author

Hannah Kent is a contemporary Australian writer, as well as the co-founder and deputy editor of Australian literary journal *Kill Your Darlings*. She is completing her PhD at Flinders University. In 2011 she won the inaugural Writing Australia Unpublished Manuscript Award. Kent was included in the 2013 Waterstones 11 for her debut novel *Burial Rites* (2013), which revisits the true story of Agnes Magnúsdóttir, the last person to be executed in Iceland

This book is available for download as an eBook. For more information, please visit lpl.overdrive.com or call 519-661-4600.