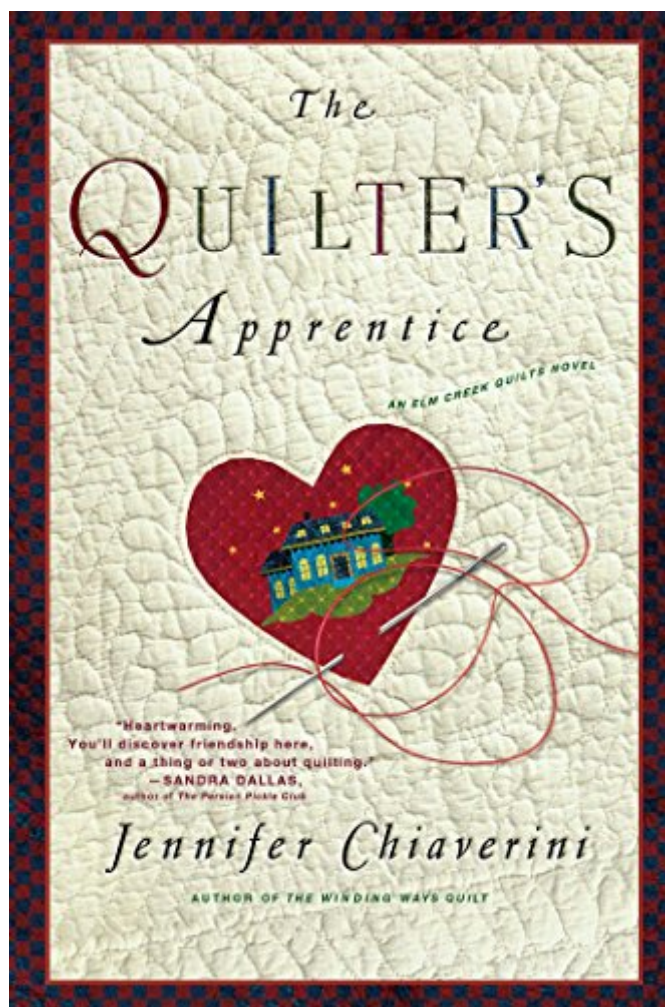


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The Quilter's Apprentice: A Novel (The Elm Creek Quilts Book 1)



Synopsis

Jennifer Chiaverini's bestselling Elm Creek Quilts series starts with *The Quilter's Apprentice*, a timeless tale of family, friendship, and forgiveness as two women weave the disparate pieces of their lives into a bountiful and harmonious whole, and begin the legacy of the Elm Street Quilters. When Sarah McClure and her husband, Matt, move to Waterford, Pennsylvania, she hopes to make a fresh start in the small college town. Unable to find a job both practical and fulfilling, she takes a temporary position at Elm Creek Manor helping its reclusive owner Sylvia Compson prepare her family estate for sale and after the death of her estranged sister. Sylvia is also a master quilter and, as part of Sarah's compensation, offers to share the secrets of her creative gifts with the younger woman. During their lessons, the intricate, varied threads of Sylvia's life begin to emerge. It is the story of a young wife living through the hardships and agonies of the World War II home front; of a family torn apart by jealousy and betrayal; of misunderstanding, loss, and a tragedy that can never be undone. As the bond between them deepens, Sarah resolves to help Sylvia free herself from remembered sorrows and restore her life—and her home—to its former glory. In the process, she confronts painful truths about her own family, even as she creates new dreams for the future. Just as the darker sections of a quilt can enhance the brighter ones, the mistakes of the past can strengthen understanding and lead the way to new beginnings. A powerful debut by a gifted storyteller, *The Quilter's Apprentice* tells a timeless tale of family, friendship, and forgiveness as two women weave the disparate pieces of their lives into a bountiful and harmonious whole.

Book Information

File Size: 3435 KB

Print Length: 276 pages

Publisher: Simon & Schuster; Reprint edition (January 31, 2012)

Publication Date: January 31, 2012

Sold by: Simon and Schuster Digital Sales Inc

Language: English

ASIN: B006VGG37Q

Text-to-Speech: Not enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #38,559 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #14 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > Small Town & Rural #151 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Women's Fiction > Friendship #383 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Literature & Fiction > Contemporary Fiction > American

Customer Reviews

The first in the "Elm Creek Quilters" series, "The Quilter's Apprentice" is a sweet story about a naive young woman, Sarah, who relocates to a small Pennsylvania town when her landscape architect husband gets a new job. As Matt works to restore the gardens and grounds at Elm Creek, a dilapidated old mansion, Sarah, struggling to find a job in her field, finds herself instead as paid helper to the mansion's acerbic owner, Mrs. Compson. At first thorny and uncomfortable, the relationship between Mrs. Compson and Sarah slowly unfolds as the two women create a quilt--Sarah's first. The metaphor of the quilt's patches creating a whole, just as Mrs. Compson's snippets of stories create a picture of her life, is nothing new, and perhaps a bit awkwardly handled in this first novel. It is noticeable in dialogue that nobody in real life would speak--and of the coincidences that probably would never occur. Nevertheless, this book is a keeper, and I look forward to the next in the series. I personally love quilts, although I have never quilted. I found the slow creation of the story's (and Sarah's) quilt fascinating, easy to read, and just simply charming. This is not a fast-paced book, and it is not a work of literary genius. It is simply a sweet, old-fashioned story, and--I am happy to say--it works.

I quilt. I own a quilt shop. I also teach high school English. So my standards for what makes a good read are pretty high. Just because it's about quilting doesn't make it good. This story is really good. The characters are real, I have them as quilting friends, and as customers. I couldn't put it down and didn't want it to end. A good plot with nicely written flashbacks. Written by someone who really knows quilting, women and friendships.

The Quilter's Apprentice by Jennifer Chiaverini is the first book in the Elm Creek Quilt series. Although I have never quilted and doubt I ever will, I found the suggestion to read this book a good one. In the tradition of Whitney Otto's book, How to Make an American Quilt and Sandra Dallas' book, The Persian Pickle Club, Jennifer Chiaverini combines a love and knowledge of quilting with the story of two memorable characters. Best part about this book is that there are several more in the series which I now look forward to reading. Sarah McClure moves to a small town in

Pennsylvania when her husband takes a new job. With no friends and no job, she agonizes over leaving her former life in a college town. While interviewing for jobs, she is offered a job helping an older woman cleaning and sorting through her now deceased sister's home. When Sarah remarks about the beautiful quilts in the home, Sylvia Compson, who grew up in this home, offers to teach Sarah how to quilt. What happens as Sarah learns to quilt, makes friends with other quilters in the area and learns the story and history of Elm Creek ensues is a wonderful book in which the reader is captivated by these wonderful characters and the art of quilting. Jennifer Chiaverini has a real gift in explaining quilting to those who know very little as well as presenting a most intriguing story. And as I continue to read this series, I might very well consider trying to become a quilter's apprentice. Only wish I could find somebody like Sylvia Compson to teach me how to quilt.

The Quilter's Apprentice was one of the best books I've had the pleasure to sit back and read in ages! My mother also read it and has written down the names of all the quilts mentioned in the book, checking to be sure that she has the pattern for each block! The way that Ms. Chiaverini pulls the past into the present is so interesting. She compels the reader to want to read and learn more about every character in the book. My Mom and I can't wait to read the sequel, Round Robin!

The Quilter's Apprentice takes you on a trip through Waterford, Pennsylvania and through the lives of a delightful group of ladies. Sarah McClure starts out feeling like an outsider but soon becomes an integral part of the town and its people. As the book progresses, we learn a bit of the history of the dowager, Mrs. Compson. The author takes each of the ladies and stitches them into the story just like the ladies take the brightly colored scraps of material and stitch them into lovely quilts. Although I don't know how to quilt, as I read, I could almost feel the soft material beneath my fingertips and see the small neat stitches that joined each square. I could hear the laughter of the Tangled Web quilters and smell Sarah's brownies baking. This is a book that brought a smile -- and a tear. I'll keep it on my shelf to read again when winter comes and I need a bit of added warmth in my life.

Jennifer Chiaverini has a knack for pulling you into the story and making you lose your sense of the present. Her characters become very real and I found myself actually gasping out loud when a dramatic event occurred. I wish the pattern was included with the book for the spotlight quilt. She is an excellent writer and offers an escape everytime you pick up the book.

Although the character development left a little to be desired, all in all this was a good story. It's very easy to read; not "dumbed down" or written poorly or simply, just smoothly. Everything flows. As a quilter, I enjoyed having all the quilting terms and techniques incorporated into the story. I was impressed at how even the 'quilting' parts of the book still flowed with the story. (A non-quilter friend of mine read the series and fell in love with them, and is now starting to quilt!) I think that even if you don't know people similar to the characters, they are still believable...although as I said before, they should have been developed a bit more. I think the next books in the series accomplish that a bit better. I really recommend this book and the series that follows it. Although the endings are tied up fairly neatly, it is done with grace and style and leaves you feeling happy, content and wanting more, rather than feeling as if you'd wasted your time. (I've read books that are TOO neatly tied up and it made me SICK!) My suggestion: read the whole series, or at least the first 3 books together rather than stopping after the first and judging the rest based on the first.

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