



The Things We Never Said

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In 1964 Maggie wakes to find herself in a psychiatric ward, not knowing who she is or why she has been committed. She slowly begins to have memories of a storm and of a man called Jack and slowly the pieces of the past begin to come together...In 2008 Jonathan is struggling to put his differences with his parents aside to tell them he and his wife are expecting a baby, when a detective arrives to question him about crimes committed long ago...And as these two tales interweave, the secrets of the past, long kept hidden, start to come to light in unexpected and sometimes startling ways. The Things We Never Said is a powerful novel about fatherhood and motherhood; nature and nurture; cruelty and kindness; and mental breakdown. Written in beautiful, compelling prose, it is by turns revealing, witty and moving.

The Things We Never Said Details

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Author : Susan Elliot Wright

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From Reader Review The Things We Never Said for online ebook

Bookread2day says

A gem of a page turner. So much happens. The story magnificently weaves from past to present. With the blanket of snow, biting cold & roaring gale force winds. Crashing of wood falling & roof tops whirling around.

Jonathan a school teacher is accused of hitting Ryan in the class room. More in store for poor Jonathan. Fiona, Jonathans wives is expecting their first child & bleeds heavy where she is rushed to hospital.

Margaret Letitia Harrison is in a psychiatric ward having ECT, electric shock where 2 metal plates are placed on her temples. Margaret is addressed as Maggie throughout this story. More for Maggie as this brilliant story unfolds.

I highly recommend reading The Things We Never Said by Susan Elliot Wright.

Jennifer says

I didn't really enjoy this book. The plot is good and I read it to the end because I wanted to see what happened. But I never really connected with the characters, and actually found them quite annoying. There was also a disconnect with the story and the time in which it was set. As a story it could have been just as easily set in the 90's as in the 60's. There didn't seem to be any real elaboration about society's morals at the time and how this intersected with the plot. There wasn't anything much in the writing that actually signalled to you that part of it was set in the 60's in terms of current events occurring at the time or landmarks that may have been demolished/renovated being written into the background in some way. It was like it was something that was told and then you had to remember it. It also seemed to be weighed down by the issues that were being alluded to. I think it might have been better if the book focussed on just a few of them and incorporated them into the story, dialogue and the motivations/thoughts of the characters to a much greater degree than was done. The passages relating to the treatment of psychiatric patients in the 60's were good and that really was the only time I got a sense of the different time the character was living in. Disappointing.

Jo (That book-hoarding geek) says

I really enjoyed this book. It is beautifully written and I loved the characters. It is rather poignant in parts and I simply couldn't put the book down. A wonderful read, thank you Susan Elliot Wright!

Bob says

A lesson in pace and planning. At no point did I want to put this down and have a rest from it and, even if I had, there isn't really a suitable point in the novel to do so. I really didn't expect to enjoy this as much as I did. It was a book my wife chose for a book club. I recognised the author's name from my uni so picked it up and started reading. I read it in one sitting. I was completely drawn in by the plight of Maggie and Jonathan. And, although I could often guess what was coming, I felt compelled to read on. I have read some of the criticisms on here and I'm rather shocked. Someone even claimed it was 'badly-written chick-lit'. Couldn't be

further from the truth. It is an intelligent and engrossing read that reminds us (those of us old enough to remember) of the unfairness of the world in the 1960s and, I think, is a celebration of how much progress has been made with equality since then (though there is a way to go, obviously). I would highly recommend this book.

Katy Howard dane says

Really perceptive

This book captured the modern day and the 60s beautifully. It captured everything perfectly. I don't remember many authors names, I will remember Susan Elliot Wright.

B the BookAddict says

What a captivating book from this new author. An enthralling read, this debut novel set in England, deals with many issues relevant in our lives today; parenting, marriage, mental health, pregnancy, families and teaching. Ms Elliot Wright manages two threads, forty years apart, exceptionally well. Maggie and Jonathan both struggle with the issue of their identity. Well researched in the mental health practices of the 1960s; shocking to read (no pun intended) and in the sometimes unjust rules of teacher etiquette in 2009.

We follow Maggie as she struggles to reclaim the memory of her identity. It's 1964 when she wakes to find herself in a psychiatric ward; she has no recollection of her name, who she is or why she is in the ward. Tantalisingly revealed are a man called Jack, a fierce storm and a job in the theatre. But there is something important she just can't recall. Maggie remembers her life as it went awry.

Jonathan's identity falls apart as his life progresses. In present day, we find him floundering as life as he knows it; his marriage, his teaching job, his relationship with his parents all change radically. His parents feel like strangers to him, his marriage hits a rocky patch and at work, he is challenged by a unruly student who puts his job in jeopardy. He, too, finally begins to question who is he really is. Jonathan experiences his life as it begins to fall apart.

The Things We Never Said is a profound story capturing two lives as they spiral out of control. The narration is both bleakly real and beautifully descriptive. Two stories skilfully interwoven with a gentle flow. An engrossing and poignant book which earns every one of the four stars I have awarded.

Anne says

The Things We Never Said is a story told in two voices and during the prologue the reader finds themselves in 2009 on a cold, wet and windy day. This is a gentle introduction, with flash backs to the past that really sets the pace for the story that follows.

The first voice of the story is Jonathan; a teacher, a father-to-be. Jonathan is a complex and worried character, his memories of childhood are not happy, he is struggling to know how to tell his ageing and

controlling father that he is to be a grandfather. Jonathan's world changes beyond recognition, it happens so fast, with work problems and family issues, a visit from a policeman who is investigating crime that were committed over forty years ago is a huge shock, and one that will change his past, and his future.

The story goes back to 1964; Maggie is a confused and scared woman, she's locked up in a psychiatric hospital, taking tablets, undergoing electric shock treatment. Maggie cannot remember why she is there, what happened to her? One small incident sparks off the beginning of Maggie's recollections, and as she gradually remembers her past, the reader accompanies her on her painful and traumatic journey.

At first, it is difficult to see how Maggie and Jonathan's lives can be connected, but as Susan Elliot Wright gently and carefully relays their individual stories, the links between them are uncovered.

The Things We Never Said is elegantly intriguing, the writing is passionate and authentic, the characters have flaws, yet are so very human. The sharp contrasts between the 1960s and the present day are clear, and fit together quite perfectly.

Susan Elliot Wright has explored many themes within this novel; the shock and shame of illegitimacy during the 60s; the pressures and political correctness of the modern-day teaching profession. The story centres on loss and deceit and the title is so very apt, for many people, certainly the lead characters in this story, it is the things that are not said that can have such a long-lasting and damaging effect on lives, and on futures.

There is a quote from author Veronica Henry on the cover of The Things We Never Said, she says "if you love Maggie O'Farrell, you will love this". I'm usually not so keen on comparisons and Maggie O'Farrell is a fabulous author, I was worried that comparing this debut novel with such an accomplished and successful author was a big big ask. However, I am delighted to say that I agree with Veronica Henry. Susan Elliot Wright has produced a superb story, she writes beautifully. I loved every page.

Monique Mulligan says

Two tales interweave to form a whole in Susan Elliot Wright's debut novel, *The Things We Never Said*. It took a little while for me to warm to the book, but once I did, I found myself engrossed as the dual narratives unfolded and then intersected, revealing secrets, lies and a tragedy that changed the lives of the main characters forever. I like the cover; a tired, perhaps confused, woman watches waves break onto the shore - it makes me wonder what she is thinking. Does she see escape in those waves? Or is she afraid they will crush her? Are they calming, stirring or overwhelming? When I dream of big waves, it usually means I'm feeling overwhelmed, so looking at this cover art, I imagine that she is overwhelmed by life, perhaps seeking a way out.

In 1964, Maggie wakes to find herself in a psychiatric ward. How did she get here? Why is she here? And who is she? As Maggie adjusts to life in this almost draconian institution, a place where it is better not to ask questions, she slowly pieces together memories ... memories that include a storm and a man called Jack. The reader is taken into Maggie's life a couple of years before her committal, revealing the circumstances that led to her current state. As her story is revealed, a heart-breaking event is exposed that makes her fragile state of mind more easily understood.

Alternate chapters share the story of Jonathan. It's 2008 and his story begins with him attempting to tell his parents that he and his wife are expecting a child. His father is not an easy man and when he dies before Jonathan can share the news, Jonathan at first feels as though a burden has been lifted. It's a temporary reprieve. He does not expect to feel the grief that hits him later, as memories of his father wander into his

mind unbidden; nor does he expect to react to a difficult student at school in a way that results in him being charged for assault. Far from the joy he should be feeling at impending fatherhood, he is instead fighting for his career and reputation, questioning his relationship with his father, struggling in his marriage ... and then a detective turns up seeking information about a cold case Jonathan is inexplicably linked to via DNA matching. When his mother reveals a long-buried secret, Jonathan is left wondering who he is ... and where he comes from.

The Things We Never Said is a well-written book that ties together the two stories smoothly, with a particular emphasis on the fragility of the human psyche. The story line explores family relationships, biological and non-biological bonds, and mental strength and weakness in times of adversity in a bittersweet and moving manner, resulting in a slow moving novel with a complex flavour. I found Maggie's story especially touching; her experiences on the whole evoked a more sympathetic response in me than Jonathan's, even though I felt for him as his world fell apart. I didn't connect with the characters as strongly as I would have hoped, meaning they didn't leave a lasting impression, but overall, I liked the way their story was crafted.

Amber Myott says

The time it took me to read this book was not a reflection of its merit but more my lack of time to devote to it ! This was beautifully written and the time shifts were easy to follow unlike other novels attempts that jump all over the place ! Excellent research went into this story in relation to the treatment of mental health in the 50's . This would be a great holiday read

Shelleyrae at Book'd Out says

Unfolding through dual narratives, *The Things We Never Said* by Susan Elliot Wright, alternates between the past and present.

In 1964, it takes Maggie weeks to remember the events that led to her being committed to a psychiatric hospital. Random flashes of memory, the wild winds of a hurricane...Jack...snow... cold..a crying baby...gradually resolve into a tragic history she would rather forget.

In 2008, Jonathon's comfortable life is slowly falling apart. When his father passes away unexpectedly, his mother is forced to reveal a long buried secret. Lost, angry and upset, the stress threatens to compromise his marriage and his career.

Gradually the link between Maggie and Jonathon reconciles, revealing the tragic history that binds them.

Despite the emotive issues involved in this story, I found it fairly slow. Though the general themes interest me and overall, I found the premise enticing, for whatever the reason I had a hard time connecting with both the story and the characters.

There were some moments in the plot that surprised me, though none I can mention without revealing spoilers. It has quite a busy storyline dealing with rape, family dysfunction, adoption, deceit, false accusations and mental illness which affects both timelines in different ways.

I think the author handled the alternate narratives well. Though I had some sympathy for Jonathon, I also

thought him weak and self involved. I didn't warm to his wife either, who used her pregnancy as an excuse to essentially abandon him to his anxieties.

I could more easily empathise with Maggie's story and the way in which she was affected by what happens to her. Hers is a heartbreaking story of grief and loss.

Though The Things We Never Said didn't grip me in the way I hoped, it is a poignant tale of tragedy and secrets and a strong debut from an author with promise.

Elaine says

This is an absolutely superb read. It is a story told in two halves with each chapter alternating between the two strands of the story, which then eventually dovetail together.

The first story is that of Maggie, who we first meet as a mental health patient in 1964. Maggie has no recollection of her life before entering the hospital and her story is divulged as she slowly starts to remember when we find out that she has had to make some very brave decisions which will affect her and others for a long time to come. It is not a pretty read, the events that brought her to this point in life and her treatment in hospital are very moving and quite harrowing at times.

The second story is that of Jonathan and takes place 40 years on. We meet him at a time when everything is going wrong in his life including, but not exclusively, problems at work and his father's death and the strain everything is putting on his marriage have really brought him to a low point. The only thing he has to look forward to is the birth of his first child. There are times in the book where you feel that he isn't getting the support he needs from his wife Fiona, but as a pregnant woman she has her own set of priorities. As the book says, when a woman is pregnant, she is the most important person in the world so when, on top of everything else, an unexpected visitor arrives with some quite shocking news that will have far reaching implications for Jonathan, he really feels he is on his own.

As I read the book, moving towards the point where the two stories meet up, I could appreciate how well the author had plotted this suspense filled story, which is very unusual, poignant and thought provoking. Like a jigsaw puzzle, each part of the storyline very neatly fits together until eventually you see the whole picture, with no spares.

There are some very serious issues in the book, which are dealt with in a very matter of fact way, not too melodramatic, but just right. It wasn't a book that I could sit and read in one go, partly because I didn't want it to end, but I kept having to put it down to catch my breath and take it all in.

It really is a special read, about parenthood, love, loss and mental health; one that I found very emotional and when it reached its very satisfying ending, I had to wipe a little tear away from my eye.

Maxine (Booklover Catlady) says

3.5 stars, it would have been an easy 4 stars except I felt the first half of the book was just a touch slow, the second half was a much more interesting read.

The book flits between Maggie's life, a woman who wakes up in a mental asylum in 1964 and can't

remember why she's there, and Jonathan's life in the present day.

It takes a while before the two timelines start to intertwine and makes sense but the book is filled with wonderfully honest images of the good, the bad and the ugly of marriage, life, family and self. Once past the halfway point I was really intrigued by where the plot was heading and the characters were becoming more interesting.

I found Maggie's story fascinating all the way through, and a lot of emotion is felt no doubt by many readers for Maggie. She's a great character.

The book is compared to books by Maggie O'Farrell and anyone who likes a moving story focused on family and complex relationships will like this book. It's not my normal choice of book, I picked it up from the local library during a "Read Regional" book promotion, I'm all for supporting upcoming British authors.

I loved how the story came together towards the end and felt the author did an exceptional job on the ending. I really would like to give this four stars, but it's just that first half being a touch slow that holds me back, but hey, you might love it.

Judy Collins says

THE THINGS WE NEVER SAID, a captivating debut by Susan Elliot Wright, and narrated by Kate Lee, of mental health issues of the sixties and highly charged topics of pregnancy, marriage, and family secrets.

Set in England, we learn of Maggie of events forty years apart. In 1964, Maggie awakens to find herself in a psychiatric ward and has no recollection of her name or why she is here. There is a man named Jack a storm, a crying baby, and a job in a theatre; however, it is blurred.

Jonathan, a young complex teacher, is waiting to become a father for the first time with his wife, Fiona. Presently in 2008, we find Jack, with a comfortable life; however, problems with his parents, his marriage, and issues at school by a student who puts his job in jeopardy. His life is slowly falling apart. When his father passes away his mother is forced to reveal a dark buried secret. Now distraught, stressed, his marriage, and career are threatened.

As the story unfolds through dual narratives, alternating between past and present; interwoven as two lives spiral out of control. Gradually the connection between Maggie and Jonathan comes to light, revealing the tragic history that binds them.

Can only imagine how scared it must have been locked up in a psychiatric ward, undergoing shock treatment and taking pills and the attendants were far from warm. As small sparks seem to come to her, she gradually recalls her past as we follow her journey.

A poignant and emotional tale of tragedy and dark secrets, as well as family dysfunction. Sometimes listening to the audio was a little confusing with the back and forth in time; however, the author did an excellent job with her research into the mental health practices of the sixties and some of the other pertinent parts of the story line.

I was not totally invested in the characters and a little removed; however overall it is a well-written story of the weaknesses and strengths of our personalities, and how well we deal with stresses of life, tragedy, grief, and loss. The author explores family, relationships, marriage with a slow-paced, complex debut.

Anne (Booklady) Molinarolo says

I struggled with to say about this novel, because I honestly don't know how I feel about it even though it has been circulating within my brain since this morning. I was intrigued by the premise: In 1964, a young woman named Maggie wakes up one morning in hospital not knowing really who she is or why she is there. She knows that she is physically fine, but her mind is shattered, She knows enough to put her best face forward, because if the nurses believe she is too happy, wary, or sad she'll be sent to "treatment" the following morning. The treatment is electric shocks, and they seem to scramble her memory even more. She is terrified of storms for some reason. Her memory almost miraculously becomes whole at a social function at the mental hospital when she touches the hand of a fellow patient who had a nervous breakdown after losing his wife and child. Something bad happened to her that night of a terrible storm when she had her first date with Jack.

Then we readers meet Jonathan in present day. He is a teacher. His wife is finally pregnant. He's put off telling his parents the good news because he doesn't get on with them - his father mainly. His father dies. A student accuses him of hitting him, and Jonathan is suspended indefinitely. Soon after his father's funeral, a detective appears at his doorstep. He is from the Cold Case division and Jonathan's DNA shows a familial match to several old unsolved is crimes. This is where Maggie and Jonathan's stories merge.

Some parts of the novel were beautifully written given that the author chose mental illness, date rape, and family ties - nature vs. nurture - as subjects. Some parts needed closer editing because some passages repeated themselves and was very disconcerting. At times the novel dragged somewhat - the pacing was not steady. The characters were well developed more or less. I loved Maggie. I wanted to hug her and hoped she'd be well at the novel's end. Jonathan? He was narcissistic, whiny, wimpy for a man of forty. He was too absorbed with his problems and ignoring his wife and mother. It was all about him until the very end of the novel. He did redeem himself in this reader's eyes. The ending did move me to tears. Was it a great summer read - no, but I did like it.

Abbie says

Told during two different times, we follow the main characters, Maggie from 1964 and Jonathan from 2008. The prologue drew me in immediately with enough unanswered questions to keep me intrigued.

Maggie's story is really moving. The reader first meets her in 1964 when she is a patient in a psychiatric hospital. Susan has written these parts of the book wonderfully, horrifying yet with glimpses of humour, it has the perfect balance. I really liked Maggie, she has an inner strength and courage that I admired greatly.

Jonathan is having a difficult time as events seem to conspire against him. Expecting his first child with his wife, he is finding it difficult to tell his parents due to the difficult relationship he has with them. I was rooting for him throughout the book, desperately hoping things would work out for him.

Without giving the plot away, the two stories come together perfectly. Mental health and parenting feature in this book and Susan has written sensitively and beautifully about difficult issues. The book is not depressing, however, and I felt uplifted by the ending.

A compelling read that is written beautifully, I would definitely recommend this book. I'm glad I finally got

around to reading it as part of my 10 books of summer.
