

The Book of Fires

Jane Borodale

Jane Borodale sets *The Book of Fires* in eighteenth-century England, shifting from rural Sussex to London. How successfully do you think she captures this era? In what ways does she do this?

The Book of Fires is a work of historical fiction. What other genres do you think this novel falls under and why?

Do you sympathise with John Blacklock? Do your feelings towards him change as the story progresses? If so, when and why?

What do you think *The Book of Fires* reveals about the perception of women and their role during this period?

How significant is the character of Lettice Talbot? What, in your opinion, does she bring to the novel?

In chapter nine, Agnes asks Mary Spurren: 'So Blacklock is a chemist then, or alchemist?' and Mary answers, 'Just a maker of fireworks.'

Pyrotechnist. Never heard of such a thing before I got here.' What did you know about pyrotechnics before reading *The Book of Fires*?

How has this book shaped your understanding of this particular form of science?

The Book of Fires is the title of one of the volumes on John Blacklock's shelf. What do you think this symbolises and do you think it is a powerful title for this novel?



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