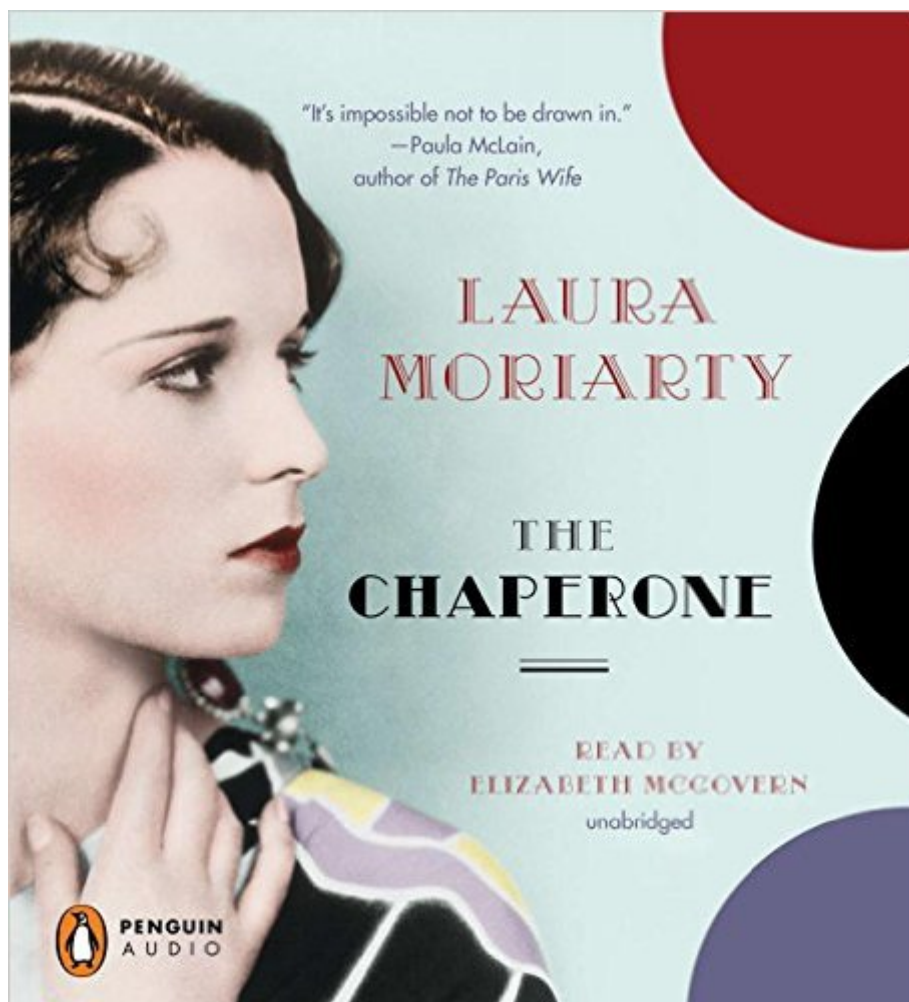


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# The Chaperone



## Synopsis

A New York Times bestseller, *The Chaperone* is a captivating novel about the woman who chaperoned an irreverent Louise Brooks to New York City in the 1920s and the summer that would change them both. Only a few years before becoming a famous silent-film star and an icon of her generation, a fifteen-year-old Louise Brooks leaves Wichita, Kansas, to study with the prestigious Denishawn School of Dancing in New York. Much to her annoyance, she is accompanied by a thirty-six-year-old chaperone, who is neither mother nor friend. Cora Carlisle, a complicated but traditional woman with her own reasons for making the trip, has no idea what she's in for. Young Louise, already stunningly beautiful and sporting her famous black bob with blunt bangs, is known for her arrogance and her lack of respect for convention. Ultimately, the five weeks they spend together will transform their lives forever. For Cora, the city holds the promise of discovery that might answer the question at the core of her being, and even as she does her best to watch over Louise in this strange and bustling place she embarks on a mission of her own. And while what she finds isn't what she anticipated, she is liberated in a way she could not have imagined. Over the course of Cora's relationship with Louise, her eyes are opened to the promise of the twentieth century and a new understanding of the possibilities for being fully alive. Drawing on the rich history of the 1920s, '30s, and beyond—from the orphan trains to Prohibition, flappers, and the onset of the Great Depression to the burgeoning movement for equal rights and new opportunities for women—Laura Moriarty's *The Chaperone* illustrates how rapidly everything, from fashion and hemlines to values and attitudes, was changing at this time and what a vast difference it all made for Louise Brooks, Cora Carlisle, and others like them. From the Trade Paperback edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Cora Carlisle has decided to do a good deed-she'll escort drop-dead gorgeous 15yr. old Louise Brooks to New York City to study modern dance when her parents are too busy to accompany her. Her two boys have graduated high school and are off to college in the fall, her husband Alan busy with his law practice and Cora sees an opportunity to experience bustling New York. And Heaven knows, it's 1920 and a young girl's reputation is still to be jealously guarded if she is to secure a marriage to the right man. Cora has the first few glimmerings that she has lassoed a tornado when Louise disappears at the train station while waiting with their respective families to see them off to New York. When Cora catches up with Louise, she's blatantly flirting with a young man, not going to the bathroom as she suggested. Well-read Louise runs circles around Cora on the train trek to New York, flanking and challenging Cora's slightly fussy moral lessons. This girl is out to experience LIFE and Cora is an obstacle to be outmaneuvered. Meanwhile Cora has some secrets of her own. While she has grown up in the Midwest, she is not a native and Cora explores her orphan roots in New York City. A small history lesson is delivered in Cora's personal history. At the turn of the century, some of New York's orphanages had their healthy young children routinely sent off on trains throughout the Midwest, lined up at train stations and churches and people could "adopt" any of the orphans they wished. Cora was fortunate to end up in a good situation but still wonders who her parents were and why they turned her over to the nuns at the orphanage. She learns that and more.

The Chaperone This book is a very engaging tale that takes place during the time when women's corsets are being loosened. While it is an easy read, it has a lot to say, and I think that most readers will enjoy it as much as I did! This is NOT a coming-of-age story, rather it is a "coming into one's own" novel, or maybe even a bit more like a drama (or "dramedy") of manners. What reading the book really resembles is watching a flower opening. Cora, our protagonist, begins to unfurl and finally come into her own in the course of the book. In flashbacks, Cora's life story is revealed. In each phase of her life, Cora does for others and does exactly what society expects from her. She spends her early years in an orphanage run by nuns in New York City. She is put on the "orphan train," is adopted by the Kaufmanns, makes a very respectable marriage to Alan Carlisle, and raises two sons. To all outward appearances, Cora has a wonderful life, and she does all that society expects from her. However, Cora once saw something that Alan would rather she not know about,

and this knowledge gives her an upper hand that she holds in reserve. When she sees an ad for a chaperone job that will take her to New York City, she applies and gets the job. Alan is forced to let her do this, and he knows that part of her motivation in going to New York is to seek her birth mother. As we move into Cora's present tense, first in New York City, and later at home, she begins to do what brings HER joy and happiness. She begins to blossom in these pages, and we have enough empathy to feel for her -- to cheer for her as she finds herself and seeks her own joy, which may be quite different from what society dictates.

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