

The King's General (1946)

This novel is often overlooked despite being one of du Maurier's Cornwall novels, and inspired by Menabilly.

- Why do you think this is?
- How do you feel about the novel/where would you rank it in her novels?
- What do you see in common with her other novels?

This is a novel deeply rooted in Cornwall, its history and people. We know that she did a great deal of research on the Civil War in Cornwall, and on Menabilly, and it's generally considered that what the novel depicts is accurate.

- How do you think she handles the source material and brings it to life?
- How well do you think the civil war is depicted?

This has been described as a romantic novel, a historical novel, and a Gothic novel.

- Where would you place it in a genre?
- The 'Gothic' label has perhaps come about because of the setting in a castle-like building, and/or because of the ghostly element of the story. Do you think it has any elements of Gothic?

The novel's setting at Menabilly is very significant, and it is the first novel that she wrote there. The landscape around it is also significant.

- How does the house play a part in the story? Does it enclose, protect, or what?
- What role does the landscape play?

Characterisation is very strong in this novel, and Honor is in the mould of du Maurier's other wayward heroines who refuse to be pitied.

- Who is your favourite character?
- How do you feel about Honor?
- Richard? And their relationship?
- Dick (who reminds me of Linton in *Wuthering Heights*)
- What does the book suggest about love, honour, bravery, war and family?
- What other themes appear in the book?
- How do you feel about the ambiguous ending?

'I have seen the shadows creep on an autumn afternoon from the deep Pridmouth Valley to the summit of the hill, and there stay a moment, waiting on the sun. I have seen, too, the white sea mists of early summer turn the hill to fantasy, so that it becomes, in a single second, a ghost land of enchantment, with no sound coming but the wash of breakers on the hidden beach, where at high noon, the children gather cowrie shells. Dark moods too, of bleak November, when the rain sweeps in a curtain from the southwest. But quietest of all, the evenings of late summer, when the sun has set, and the moon has not yet risen, but the dew is heavy in the long grass.'