



At Home With the Templetons

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When the Templeton family from England takes up residence in a stately home in country Australia, they set the locals talking - and with good reason. From the outside, the seven Templetons seem so bohemian, unusual... peculiar even. No one is more intrigued by the family than their neighbours, single mother Nina Donovan and her young son Tom. Before long, the two families' lives become entwined in unexpected ways, to the delight of Gracie, the sweetest of the Templeton children. In the years that follow, the relationships between the Templetons and the two Donovans twist and turn in unpredictable and life-changing directions, until a tragedy tears them all apart. What will it take to bring them together again?

At Home With the Templetons Details

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Jenny says

At almost 600 pages, this book is 200-300 words too long. In part 1 I was rather enjoying the languid walk through the lives of the Templetons and Nina and her son Tom. By part 2 my interest was on the wane, but I forged on. Almost 400 pages in (alright, 390-something) I thought, good god, this is getting a bit much. From there I skimmed. Honestly, this would have been far better if it wasn't so long-winded. Then again, the actual plot, buried as it was in all those words, wasn't really anything to write home about. Won't be reading any more of McInerney's titles. She has an annoying habit, among others, of writing lengthy passages of exposition. Frankly, life's too short for books like this.

Sam Still Reading says

Monica McInerney writes good, solid books usually combining families in various locations with a bit of romance and drama. In this, *At Home With the Templetons* doesn't fail to disappoint. It's a good book recommendation for your grandmother, mother or sister.

The Templetons arrive from England to country Victoria, Australia and take up residence at the family 'colonial mansion'. Each weekend, the family dresses up in period costume and opens the house to strangers to relive the gold rush era. There are just a few problems with this:

- Most of the Templeton children don't want to do the tours
- Their aunt is an alcoholic and often insults the visitors
- The kids do some wacky things (such as underage driving)
- The fellow townspeople think they are attention seekers

The book follows the four children (Charlotte, Audrey, Spencer and in particular, Gracie) as they grow up in this environment. Spencer befriends Tom Donovan and Gracie her mother Nina. Nina is wary of getting involved with the Templetons but their paths meet consistently. So when the Templetons must return to England, Nina takes over as caretaker of Templeton Hall.

Many years are then covered in a series of letters, faxes and emails. Gracie grows up and the Templetons and Donovans are entwined again, with dramatic results, arguments and dramas. Will it have a happy ending? I'll let you work that one out.

I found the character of Hope (the alcoholic aunt) quite annoying due to her drunken stupidity, but fortunately she is less involved in the later sections of the book. I also thought it was a bit strange for Gracie to lose her drive completely after the Event and be so directionless for years after, but I suppose that's what gave the book its last 200 pages.

The book is well written and an easy read, good for summer holidays.

Zoey says

3.5 ★

Helen McKenna says

The Templeton family live in a stately home near the Victorian city of Castlemaine. While the other kids get to have fun on the weekends, the Templetons have to dress up in period costume and run tours of their home (Templeton Hall) - which prove to be a surprise hit with tourists. Having only recently arrived from England, they keep very much to themselves. At first their neighbour Nina is happy to maintain a distance. But then, their lives become interlinked and she finds herself drawn into their family and all its dramas, not entirely willingly.

The story is told in Monica McInerney's usual warm and engaging prose and you find yourself immediately involved with the characters and their individual struggles. You can't help but like Grace, the youngest daughter and the only child who is really committed to the whole business of running Templeton Hall. I also really liked the character of Spencer (as a child), as there was a real devil-may-care attitude about him that was quite amusing.

The first part of the story is quite detailed and covers a relatively short space of time, while the later chapters are spread over a bigger span of years. While the earlier part was slower moving, I enjoyed it more as I felt the later part skipped over details a bit, in the interests of moving the story to its conclusion.

As usual Monica McInerney really gets the settings right, you can feel yourself in the Victorian countryside and later in London and Paris, when the story moves there. She also covers the theme of family relationships and all their complexities that begin in childhood and carry through until adulthood - sometimes never being resolved fully.

An enjoyable, engaging read that kept me involved right until the end.

Cassandra Kay Silva says

Interesting writing style. The authors real gift is connecting you to characters and connecting characters to each other. These characters really don't fall flat in any way, they are multidimensional, you get to see them from not only their own vantage point but also that of friends and family, they are relatable, they are humorous, some are introspective, some are not but they are all so viably human that it really draws you into the story and gives you a deep connection with their lives and the storyline. That being said, I think the letters were perhaps not my favorite approach to reconnecting these lives after they displaced from each other. I felt some of that brilliance in writing was lost in the letters, it became extremely long winded and in the final portion of the book it just became almost as a sighing heave. It was too predictable, for such an obvious set of circumstances towards the end we really didn't need so many words to get us to this point. We didn't have to see it from EVERY angle possible, we didn't have to draw that out so much. I think it tired me as an audience member. It made me feel bored with it all. I would have loved it if she would have ended a bit more poignantly and left it to the reader? Perhaps at the bit where Gracie blows the whistle near the water when she goes back, Have Tom come up at her from behind, get to see that real spark and chemistry between

those two and then leave it to our juicy imaginations where it went from there? I'm not saying she had to leave loose ends I am just saying that she needed less words and more emotional charge to really bring it all to a close. By the end the emotional charge had run out for me, it got lost somewhere in all of that writing, which was too bad because there were so many connecting moments and I just adored all of these characters, even Henry and Charlotte in their own ways. It was a completely human piece and all that being said, a really great one just to pick up and go with.

Alison says

A slow start as we are introduced to the characters and their world but it pulled me in enough to read on. In a way, though, the prologue snatched some of the tension away - we knew the lost lovers would meet again.

When the Gracie/Tom story took the centre of the narration, I enjoyed it. At last we had some deep emotion, some 'zing' and I found myself holding my breath at some tense moments in their relationship. The remaining characters were unsympathetic. I rated Eleanor next most engaging after Gracie - her story is not uncommon. Henry was intriguing, but a typical charming chancer although he redeemed himself to some extent by working to pay off the family debt. The strength of the book is that everything and everybody's actions and decisions interweave - something that help keep the reader's attention. But the plot lines were a little boring.

The book is a pleasant read, but it is far too long, something that isn't helped by pages of recap towards the end. I itched to have my writer's red pen in my hand!

Ann says

Er zijn eigenlijk geen echt sympathieke personages hier. Tom ok, en Hillary. Maar verder hebben ze allemaal hun vervelende kantjes. En eigenlijk zelfs Tom, die zo goedgelovig is. Maar toch wil je weten hoe het hen vergaat, leef je mee. Het einde is wat sappig maar dat valt te vergeven. En eigenlijk had je het niet anders gewild.

Bells says

Not entirely sure why I stuck with this book. Perhaps just through sheer bloody mindedness that I had a) previously enjoyed some of her work and b) I paid for it.

It was full of so much cliché. Some of the most predictable writing I've ever read. The characters were ALL irritating, especially Gracie who I suspect was supposed to be the one we loved and cared about the most. She was just whiney and silly. The Templetons themselves were cardboard cut out "posh" types who had absolutely no redeeming features. Every time Hope was on the page, I wanted to hurl the book in disgust. Yes she was supposed to be unlikeable, but even unlikeable characters can be interesting to read when well written.

The ending was heralded about three quarters of the way through. I just stuck with it to see just how right I was.

Awful.

Shauna says

This was more of a 1.5 star book. I wanted to hurl this book across the room at several points while yelling "Just get ON with it, people!"

If it had been about 150 pages shorter, I would have liked it, I think. It certainly makes me want to move to Australia.

Bethany says

The first Monica McInerney book I read, *Greetings from Somewhere Else*, I adored. As such, I keep reading her books, but none of them have been quite up to par.

****Slight, vague references to spoilers****

At Home with the Templetons was probably my least favorite. The themes and "morals" seemed cliché, and the book seemed to drag on quite a bit. I kept thinking, isn't it over yet? I guessed the climax's resolution long before it happened and was disappointed in the characters' reactions to that. Why couldn't they figure it out when that character had done that before?

MaryG2E says

4.5★s

A really well written novel about families, friendship, truth and lies, with a lovely romantic theme as well.

I greatly enjoyed this novel, and have become quite the Monica McInerney fan. I have previously read *Family Baggage* and *Hello From The Gillespies* and consider this one the best yet.

Firstly, McInerney writes well. Her novels are well structured and the narratives flow well. Her writing style is easy to read but her prose is not dumbed down. She demonstrates great skill as an experienced writer in her genre.

Secondly, I think McInerney's greatest strength is her talent for characterisation. Her characters are well-drawn, cleverly nuanced personalities. None of her characters are absolutely perfect - they all have flaws or quirks, which make them seem real to this reader. In *At Home* we see how apparently confident and competent people have hidden insecurities which influence their behaviours and decision-making, often causing great harm to themselves or others.

McInerney's ability to explore the inner workings of family dynamics, and her gentle expose' of human frailties makes for convincing story-telling.

Sharon Siepel says

Part One (the first sixteen chapters) of *At Home with The Templetons* is absolutely delightful. Can you imagine any family trying to maintain a normal life in a home where they have to dress in period costumes and tourist parade through your living space? Now imagine a family with issues...major issues. It is funny, charming, and a little sad.

The pace in Part Two slows down a great deal as it is mostly done through letters that cover eight years. It is a clever way to keep the reader apprised of the important details that occur over almost a decade, but I really missed the character interactions that made Part One so very interesting.

The narrative picks back up in Part Three and at this point the book becomes less quirky and a lot more predictable. Tragedy strikes this tragic family and it is the fate of two of the more empathetic characters that compelled me to finish this novel.

The first part of this book reminded me of *Cheaper by the Dozen*, by Frank E. Gilbrith, but the rest of the book is more like *The Promise: A Novel*, by Danielle Steel

Monica McIneney's interesting cast of characters make this a novel worth reading.

Charlie says

This book gets off to a slow start because the set up is under the constraint of depicting the life, circumstances and background for the characters. At times it gets a little tedious being stuck in everyday life but if the reader sticks with it they'll eventually see the necessity of the journey. This becomes evident around chapter seventeen (roughly 250 pages in). It is here, that emotional attachment grows especially for the characters Gracie and Tom, which magnetically become the driving force of the story's continuation. The shift in focus is essential to the understanding and growth of the couple because ultimately the story becomes about them, their sorrows, future and ends with a difficult decision. Each character has contributed to the complexity and demonstrates how bad decisions, impulses and choices tangle with other fate even when we don't mean for it to occur. Everything touches everyone. The drawback is the length and build up. Some readers might not have the patience and lose interest before the seventeenth chapter. Also, near the ending a repetition of perspective of events is shown/told from multiple characters. I felt this was redundant and wasn't absolutely certain why it was necessary. I typically do not like this approach in any book because personally I do not want to read the same scene over and over. It is done well, but contributes to the overall extended length of the book.

*This review is based on the advanced reader copy provided by the Amazon Vine program.

Dale Harcombe says

An English family settles in a stately home in Castlemaine, Australia and conducts tours all dressed in appropriate period costume for the public. Nearby lives widowed, Nina Donovan and her young son, Tom. Nina's initial reaction towards the Templetons is negative. I thought it should have stayed that way. Recently Bette and I were talking about the skill need by an author when writing about unlikable character. I

have to say I felt that with this Monica McInerney book. With the exception of Gracie, all of the Templetons were selfish and manipulative and they didn't care who they hurt along the way to achieving their own ends. I failed to understand why Nina had such a fascination with them and was drawn into their lives. From when the reader first meets Gracie as a child, Gracie is a breath of fresh air. She was probably the main reason I kept reading this long novel, which seemed like it could have been much shorter.

I sympathised with Nina Donovan, mother of young Tom for a time but even lost sympathy for her along the way. It is Gracie and Tom who carry this story and hold the reader's attention and I found the parts relating their stories most interesting. I usually like Monica McInerney's books but this is not my favourite, largely due to the characters. Other people may react differently than I did though.

I probably wouldn't have kept reading except it was Monica McInerney, so I knew I would get something out of it.

Tonya says

What a book! Monica knocked my socks off! This was my first book but it won't be my last by a long shot! The Templetons are a big imposing bunch, each with a big personality! We start out with Gracie arriving at what we know at the end to be "Templeton Hall", with some dark, curly, handsome stranger greeting her. Who was he? Then we go back to what happened to get to that moment.

Eleanor, the mother of the crew, she was an iffy character, didn't hate her but didn't care for her either. Too wishy-washy for me. Stand up for yourself love! The dad, good ole liar himself, Henry -- he is a liar, but a smooth character, a ladies man I suppose eh. Then we have the children. The oldest is Charlotte, who went to boarding school and eventually threatens to not come home until they make Aunt Hope go away --- which I think she just used as an excuse. Then we have Audrey, who is a theatrical girl. She gets a part in a play, then comes the big day. She gets up there, oh darn, stage fright! From that day on she doesn't speak to anyone. Falls in love with a therapist. Find out what happens to her...

We have one of the best characters in my opinion, Gracie next. Gracie is the most lovable, easiest to get along with character. Even Tom thinks so! Speaking of Tom, you will meet Tom and his mom Nina along the way too. Nina is another one that you will either come to understand or hate. I think there is no middle road.

One character I think we can all hate is Hope. At one teeny tiny point I thought there might be hope for Hope, but alas she ruined that one. Hope is detestable. But she makes the book enjoyable and keeps you guessing the whole entire book, highly entertaining!

And last but not least we have the youngest, the spoiled brat Spencer, who a lot of things wouldn't have happened without him. You either love him or hate him too. He didn't have many goals in life, maybe that is what being the youngest and hanging around Hope did for him.

Monica knows what readers want, and she gave it. I can't wait to get my hands on her other books. I will recommend this book to everyone! Perfect book to take to the beach, makes you forget all your own drama for a day!
