



#### **Claire FULLER**

*'I'm a novelist and short fiction writer. For my first degree I studied sculpture at Winchester School of Art, specialising in wood and stone carving. I began writing fiction at the age of 40, after many years working as a co-director of a marketing agency. I have a Masters in Creative and Critical Writing from The University of Winchester.'*  
<http://clairefuller.co.uk/>

#### **Look at the book cover, the author's photograph and short biography:**

- Describe the book covers (and the author). Be as precise as you can.
- Select one or two interesting pieces of information about the author.
- Draw conclusions:
  - o What do you expect the book to be about ?
  - o Imagine who the main character or narrator could be.
  - o In your opinion, where could the book be set? When?
  - o Think of a plot. (Try to be imaginative!)
- Get ready to report to the class. (speak for two minutes minimum)

## Now read about the book:

Were you right? About the main character, the setting (time and place), the plot?

Select information that you think is important.

From what you have learnt so far, would you like to read the book? Why? Why not?

Get ready to report to the class.

## **Synopsis and Reviews**

### **Synopsis ([www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk))**

Peggy Hillcoat is eight years old when her survivalist father, James, takes her from their home in London to a remote hut in the woods and tells her that the rest of the world has been destroyed. Deep in the wilderness, Peggy and James make a life for themselves. They repair the hut, bathe in water from the river, hunt and gather food in the summers and almost starve in the harsh winters. They mark their days only by the sun and the seasons. When Peggy finds a pair of boots in the forest and begins a search for their owner, she unwittingly begins to unravel the series of events that brought her to the woods and, in doing so, discovers the strength she needs to go back to the home and mother she thought she'd lost. After Peggy's return to civilization, her mother learns the truth of her escape, of what happened to James on the last night out in the woods, and of the secret that Peggy has carried with her ever since.

### **Reviews**

"...the book is almost impossible to put down. Fuller weaves a hypnotic intensity of detail into her narrative that gives every lie the feel of truth, like the soundless piano with weighted keys that Peggy's father painstakingly crafts out of a plank pried loose from the cabin wall. She and her father sing the notes as she plays the silent instrument, reading from a piece of Ute's old sheet music. It's an elegant metaphor for the book's heartbreaking central question: What's worse — a mother's absence or a father's lies?" **The Chicago Tribune**

"Fuller's thoroughly immersive debut takes child kidnapping to a whole new level of disturbing. . . .Fuller alternates Peggy's time in the forest with chapters that take place [nine years later] in 1985 after she reunites with her mother—building an ever-present sense of foreboding and allowing readers to piece together well-placed clues." **Publishers Weekly**

"A post-apocalyptic debut with a twist. An obsessive survivalist abducts his daughter in this gripping family drama." **The Guardian**

"Our Endless Numbered Days is inspired by fairytales; the story's menace is more Hansel and Gretel than that of a parent's real-life horror story. Peggy, a young girl, is stolen away by her survivalist father to "die Hütte", a ramshackle cottage in a European forest, and tells her that the end of the world has come, that her mother has died and they are the only survivors. [...] Fuller handles the tension masterfully in this grown-up thriller of a fairytale, full of clues, questions and intrigue."

**The Times**

Fuller evokes the natural world's beauty and brutality as her characters endure nine torrid years in the forest and the novel reaches a sinister conclusion." **The Independent**

"Claire Fuller's bewitching debut takes us from the cosy confines of a London home to the dark heart of the forest, following the breadcrumb trail of eight-year-old Peggy Hillcoat. [...] Like all good fairy tales, this is a book filled with suspense and revelation, light and shadow and the overwhelming feeling that nothing is quite as it seems in the Hillcoats' lives. It's spellbinding, scary stuff."

**The Sunday Express**

"As disturbing as it is at times delightful, and as beautiful as it is brutal, *Our Endless Numbered Days* should do for Claire Fuller what *Room* did for Emma Donoghue. It's a darkly fantastic first novel I recommend you read immediately." **Tor.com**

"An auspicious debut, an unforgettable psychological thriller with one of the most haunting unreliable narrators I have ever encountered." **Largehearted Boy**

### **3 more reviews from Amazon.UK**

I finished just this book and loved it through and through. It was gripping and spare, the right balance between tension and poetry. I enjoyed it thoroughly - It felt polished and shiny, a beautiful book with a twist or two to keep the reader guessing. Five stars to Claire Fuller on her debut novel!

At the age of eight, Peggy AKA Punzel is taken by her father from her home in London to the wilds of Germany to die Hutte. Peggy's mother, a German concert pianist, is on tour. and all has not been well between Ute and her husband, a younger British Retreater (survivalist). But Peggy is unaware of this and believes her father when he tells her that her mother, and indeed, nearly everyone is dead, and they must scavenge a living in the wilderness to be safe.

Her father is more than a little mad, and their first winter is brutal, but time goes on, and the appearance of Reuben, a former inhabitant of die Hutte, brightens Punzel's days.

As we know from the start, Peggy ends up back in London with her mother nine years later, but the two strands twist together in unexpected ways. And I love an ending that makes you sit up and go wait, what exactly did I just read? Ah, clever author!

This book is both beautifully written and hauntingly tragic. 8 year old Peggy is abducted by her father and taken into the woods where she will live out her innocence over the next 9 years, not unlike a Sleeping Beauty. As this dark story unfolds we are treated to further fairy tale elements, the two women they should meet along the road, one with a hissing cat beneath the cloth in her basket and another with the warm cup of milk that sees Peggy spew forth some of the putrid elements yet to come. Like all good fairy tales Peggy clearly needed a handsome prince to lead her to her happily ever after!

Despite the dark tragedy of this tale I enjoyed it immensely. The writing is compelling, the prose is beautiful, the mood evocative, the protagonist so likeable that you will want to protect the motherless child and warn her of the dangers that her childish innocence cannot yet know.

Be warned though, there are dark elements that are so disturbing they will linger with you.

**NOW, PRESENT THE BOOK (PLOT, CHARACTERS AND SETTING), ITS AUTHOR, YOUR EXPECTATIONS AND TELL THE CLASS WHY YOU WOULD OR WOULDN'T LIKE TO READ IT (AND MEET CLAIRE FULLER) . (SPEAK FOR 4 MINUTES MINIMUM)**

**NEW VOCABULARY YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH THE CLASS :**