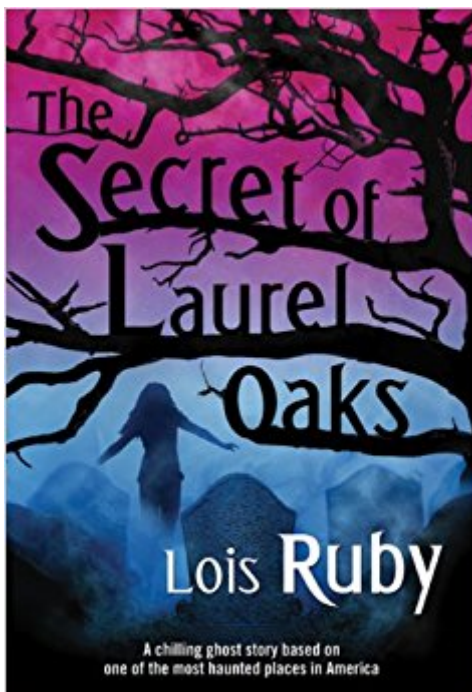


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The Secret Of Laurel Oaks



Synopsis

A haunting historical mystery based on real life events, told in the alternating points of view of a contemporary girl and a 19th century slave accused of a horrible crime. When Lila and her family visit Laurel Oaks Plantation in Louisiana, her parents and brother scoff at the claim that the house is haunted. But secretly, Lila suspects there are ghostly presences willing to communicate with her, and her alone. One spirit eager to tell her story is Daphne, a slave girl at Laurel Oaks in the 1840s, who was blamed for the poisoning deaths of two girls and their mother. Daphne's spirit senses that Lila is the very person she's been waiting for, the one who can prove her innocence so her spirit can rest at long last. Shifting back and forth from Lila's world in the present to Daphne's world in the past, the true story of what really happened that fateful night finally comes to light. Laurel Oaks is a thinly disguised version of the legendary Myrtles Plantation in Louisiana, which is on the Smithsonian's list of the ten most haunted places in America. This middle grade novel was inspired by the author's visit to the plantation and her experiences there.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Grade 6-8 • When the Barry family decides to stay at the Laurel Oaks Plantation in Louisiana, considered by the Smithsonian Institution to be one of the 10 most haunted places in the United States, a harmless bit of fun becomes a life-altering experience for Lila, 13, and her 14-year-old brother, Gabe. As they take part in the spooky evening tour of the house, Lila senses and sees what Gabe thinks are all gimmicks and Disney-style special effects. The presence of spirits is strong and one in particular is reaching out to Lila. It is the spirit of Daphne, a slave girl who

was accused of poisoning her master's wife and two daughters. Is Lila the one who can put things right for Daphne after all these years and allow peace to come to Laurel Oaks? This plot-twisting ghost story is full of history, friendship, romance, betrayal, and jealousy. Lila's and Daphne's stories are revealed through alternating chapters, shifting between today and the 1840s. While this technique works well, at times it is distracting and seems to make the plot drag needlessly. Overall, this is an interesting read with considerable potential but its ending loses steam.

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“A genuinely spooky and engrossing ghost story.” — Jennifer Armstrong, award-winning author of *The Dreams of Mairhe Mehan* “YAs will enjoy the characters' struggle between reality and myth in this innovative 'ghost story' overflowing with the power of love, friendship, and courage.” — KLIATT “This plot-twisting ghost story is full of history, friendship, romance, betrayal, and jealousy.” — School Library Journal “The bits of truth that Lois Ruby weaves into the story are what make it mysterious and chilling. This is a great book for learning about plantation life, but reading it at night will definitely give you the creeps.” — Bookloons.com “If you read this book late at night, as I did, in a dark and quiet house, as I did, you may feel the same chill I did--the someone-is-looking-over-your-shoulder chill. The heebie-jeebies. The creeps. This is a genuinely spooky and engrossing ghost story, filled with fascinating historical detail.” — Jennifer Armstrong, award-winning author of *The Dreams of Mairhe Mehan* on *The Secret of Laurel Oaks* “Lois Ruby's *The Secret of Laurel Oaks* is an intriguing mystery that takes the contemporary heroine (and the reader) on a spirited journey back and forth from a haunted house to the slave-owning family that once owned it....We are in capable hands with Ruby's deft story telling powers and her devotion to historical truths. A terrific read.” — Sonia Levitin, award-winning author of *Strange Relations*, *The Goodness Gene*, and *Dream Freedom*

The Secret of Laurel Oaks is a ghost story based on stories about The Myrtles Plantation in St. Francisville, Louisiana. The author's main purpose for writing this novel is to entertain readers. It is suspenseful, mysterious, and spooky from the beginning to the end. The theme of this book is to not believe all the rumors you may hear. In the book, a young slave girl was accused of poisoning her master's wife and two daughters. She was hanged for it

despite any evidence proving she committed these crimes. This book was written using the rhetorical mode of narration. The narrators of the story alternate between chapters. One narrator is a rebellious teenage girl named Lila from the present day. The other narrator is a teenage girl named Daphne. Daphne was a slave who lived and died on the Laurel Oaks plantation two centuries ago. During Lila's family vacation to the haunted plantation, Lila would see Daphne and other ghosts around the house. In the next chapter, Daphne describes seeing Lila to the reader. Using the style of narration is effective because it shows differences between modern times and the hard times of slavery. Alternating between narrators allowed the readers to experience a story through different perspectives. For instance, during a tour of the house, Lila looked in a mirror and saw Daphne. Then in the next chapter, Daphne describes how intently Lila was looking back at her in the mirror. Daphne knows she's a ghost and only a few people have ever seen her. She hopes Lila is the one person she can trust to tell about the secret she's been keeping for two hundred years. I loved this book and was very intrigued by the ghostly plot. The characters were interesting and even included a wise, talking tree! I did not dislike anything about this book. However, if I could change anything about this story, I would have Lila confide in her parents what she was seeing in the house. She didn't have a very good relationship with them. But all in all, I loved the book.

I loved this book. It was awesome. My friend recommended it to me saying she loved it, so I bought it, read it, and loved it! The chapters change perspective from Daphne who is a slave in the 1800s to Lila a girl in the present trying to solve Daphne's mystery. This book is a mystery novel that is perfect.

This was a surprise for my daughter and once again Lois Ruby knocks it out of the ballpark!

so amazing!

My daughter loved the book!

Great!

This is a very good read for young adults and the young at heart. There are many twists and turns. This is the second book we have read by Lois Ruby and have enjoyed both.

Ssspoookeey. And soooo good. Lila's family decides to stay at a certified haunted Laurel Oaks Plantation-turned B&B in Louisiana. They all think it's interesting and fun, except for Lila whose recent experience (which possibly involves and highly suggestive of ghosts talking to her) has made her jumpy about spirits and haunted B&B and such. Soon enough Lila encounters MANY spirits and ghosts in many shapes and forms and also has reasons to doubt whether certain people (and non-people) she sees are actually what they seem to be (people and other things) or NOT. She manages to convince her brother Gabe who firstly and appropriately thinks she's crazy but then sees and hears those spooky things himself. It's Cold Case plus Ghost Whisperer but WAY CLASSIER. There was a murder mystery, you see, and Lila is to find the secret that solves the mystery. You get slavery, romance (sweet, nonsteamy kind), love, history, all bundled into a complex murder mystery. Oh by the way, the author's note at the end says it's based on a true story. There is actually this haunted place and you can go stay there and that murder happened and all. I am doubly-spooked.

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