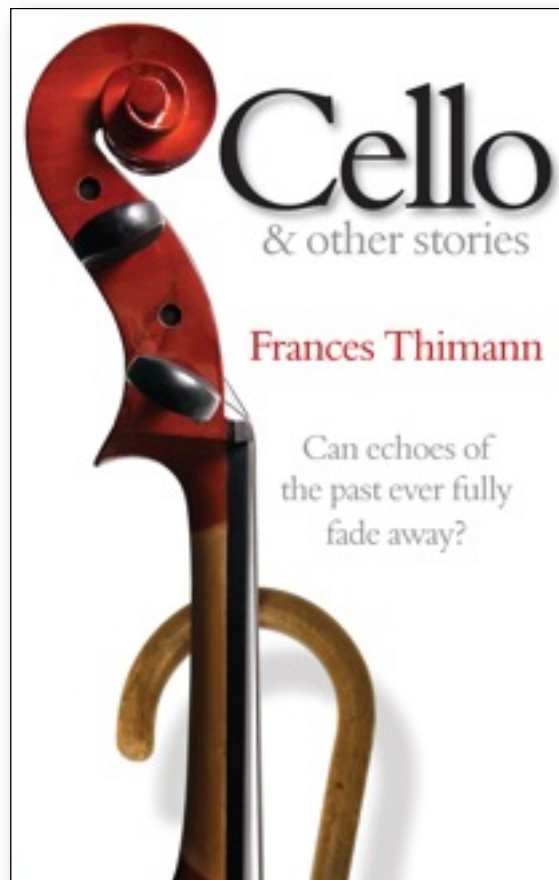


Readers' Notes



In the *Foreword*, the author discusses the portrayal of old people in modern fiction and the media. Do the stories in this collection help to break down stereotypical ideas? If so, how?

In *White Hyacinths*, the daughter finds something out about her parents' past. How does she feel about this? How does the description of the white hyacinths in the story illustrate its theme?

In *Miriam*, a family secret is revealed. How do you think Lucy will react? What might she do now?

How does the author convey Stephen's awkwardness in *Amber*?

In what ways does the *Cloth of Gold* weave its way through the story? Could the story continue?

Sailing to Zanzibar describes two journeys. How does the author link the two and does the connection work?

In *Shells*, characters from two contrasting worlds make contact. What are the barriers to understanding between them? How do the characters try to cross them? In what ways do the shells, as described at the outset, illustrate the themes of the story?

In *His Story*, is there more than one story described? What is Edward's story?

How does *Cello* affect you?

How does the author use symbols and metaphors to illustrate her themes in the collection? How does the author describe the characters in the stories? Are the descriptions effective?

About the Author

Born in London in 1944, Frances gained a first degree in music before heading into a career involving information, research and working in specialist libraries. She spent time in Africa and the Middle East with the British Council and this was where she acquired her taste for travel. She has played the piano, violin, oboe and bassoon and has always been interested in the possibilities of language and languages. Hints of her family history emerge in the short stories of her collection *Cello and Other Stories*. She recently graduated with an MA in Creative Writing from Nottingham Trent University.

Critical Praise

"... *elegiac* ..."

Ross Bradshaw

"Old age is a subject often dismissed as dull and uncomfortable, while the elderly themselves are perceived as a nuisance rather than an inspiration. This collection sets out to challenge standard caricatures and stereotypes attached to older people and in doing so, the author - a graduate from the NTU Creative Writing MA - has created eight beautifully written short stories that are observant, reflective and poetic, if somewhat melancholy in tone. Those who are now slow on their feet, ill and alone were once bright, vibrant and young and have the experiences and knowledge of a lifetime to share. Old age comes to us all (if we're lucky), which is why this kind of writing serves as an uncomfortable reminder of our own mortality. As Abraham Lincoln famously advised, 'It's not the years in your life that count. It's the life in your years.'"

Aly Stoneman, *Left Lion* 32