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**Laura Moriarty--Lawrence, KS**

Laura Moriarty's father was a marine, so she moved around a lot when she was growing up. She has lived in Montana, Utah, Florida, and Maine, and also spent a year in Malta as an exchange student. She came to Kansas for college, and fell in love with our state's landscape and weather. Moriarty earned her undergraduate degree in social work from the University of Kansas, and worked as a case manager for a few years before returning to KU to earn her Master of Arts in English. She was awarded the George Bennett Fellowship for Creative Writing at Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire, and published her first novel, *The Center of Everything*, in 2004. She has since published three other novels: *The Rest of Her Life* (2008), *While I'm Falling* (2009), and *The Chaperone* (2012). Moriarty's novels *The Rest of Her Life and The Chaperone* were named as Kansas Notable Books. *The Chaperone* will be adapted into a film. She currently lives in Lawrence, Kansas, and teaches Creative Writing at the University of Kansas.

**An Interview with Novelist Laura Moriarty**

*Miranda Ericsson interviewed Laura Moriarty via email in October, 2013*

**You have said that you fell in love with Kansas when you moved here for college. You now live and work in Kansas full time, and each of your novels is rooted in our state. Tell us a little about how living in Kansas has shaped you as a writer.**

I still love it here. I’ve been here, on an off, for about twenty-five years, and so it’s nice to feel like I really know a place. We moved a lot when I was a kid - my dad was in the military – so it’s been interesting for me to become kind of an old-timer here in Lawrence. I like seeing the town change over time, and I like watching people get older, too. I lived in an arts dorm when I was an undergrad at KU, so many of my friends were art majors, and I remember when we graduated, it seemed like they all moved to the coasts the next day – they were so excited to leave, and they couldn’t understand why I was so excited to stay put. It’s not that I didn’t have plans or curiosities about the world – I was full of ambitions, and I did travel, but I liked the idea of coming home to Lawrence. It’s just my favorite place I’ve ever lived in – I feel at home here, and that’s a big deal for me. I like the gentle landscape, the unobstructed sky. I also think it’s a great place to be a writer, because it’s cheap, but because of the university and the proximity to KC, you do get exposed to so many kinds of people and art and ideas. I have to say, though, I’m getting less and less keen on Kansas weather. But bad weather is probably good for my writing. If that’s true, then around here, I’m usually in luck.

**You told an interviewer that you sometimes find it difficult to commit to an idea when you are starting a writing project. How have you learned to push through the indecision and follow through with your ideas? Are there any unfinished novels hanging around on your hard drive?**

No. I’ve actually learned to listen to indecision and try to understand when it’s okay to let go of an idea. Sometimes ideas don’t work. There are plenty of unfinished novels on my hard drive, but that is probably where they belong.

**You teach creative writing at the University of Kansas. Does your work with writing students fuel your own creativity? What do you enjoy most about the job?**

I really love talking about stories and good writing with students who love stories and good writing. And the graduate students are always exposing me to new writers and new perspectives. Teaching also shows me how important it is to keep revising a piece, to be open to how it might improve. I get frustrated with students who are lazy revisionists – someone writes a draft with so much potential, but he or she confuses it with a final draft, or a nearly final draft. They don’t hear the ‘vision’ in ‘revision.’ That reminds me to be more open to real revision myself.

But really, I love so much about my job at KU. I can’t believe it’s my job to talk to students about words and stories and ideas. I don’t always love the grading or trying to work with people who read the Cliff Notes or people who just care about their GPAs, but most of the students seem to understand that even when we’re stressed out and tired, we’re all very lucky to be up there, thinking and learning, talking about ideas. I recently happened upon an article about workers at a Chinese toy factory – they worked all day and through much of the night in these huge, windowless rooms making toys and then sometimes sleeping right on the floor so they could get up and do it again. In the pictures, the workers looked exhausted and miserable, and I thought, ‘I can never complain about anything. Ever. I don’t even understand how lucky I am.’ But I do understand that it’s an incredible gift to have a job that interests and teaches me and allows me to connect with people over something I find so meaningful.

**Your most recent novel, *The Chaperone*, will be adapted into a film. Are you involved with the adaptation process? Can you name any actresses that you would like to see cast as Louise?**

I don’t think that I will be involved in the adaptation, but that’s okay – I feel like it’s in pretty amazing hands, and really, I’m just looking forward to sitting in the theater and watching these characters who lived in my head come to life up on a big screen. It’s going to be a trip. But I have no idea who can play Louise. She was such a rare creature, and she was so young. She’s out there, though, the girl who can play her. They just have to find her.

**What are some of the best books that you read this summer? Are there any upcoming releases that you're excited about?**

I can’t wait to read the new historical novel by Elizabeth Gilbert – it sounds amazing. This summer, I read a huge nonfiction book: *Far From the Tree* by Andrew Solomon; it was riveting. I reread *A Room With a View*. I also really liked *The Girl Who Fell from the Sky* by Heidi Durrow.

**Who are some of your favorite Kansas writers?**

Well I really like the work of your former teacher Tom Averill, of course. Lucia Orth lives here in Lawrence, and she wrote *Baby Jesus Pawn Shop*, a beautiful novel set in the Marcos-era Philippines. Mary O’Connell also lives in Lawrence, and she wrote *The Sharp Time*, which is a gorgeous young adult novel that I think many adult readers would love – her prose is so arresting, and her outlook is so thoughtful. I’m huge fan of the memoir by Kelly Barth: *My Almost Certainly Real Imaginary Jesus.* I just taught that book – it was so well written, and the graduate students loved it.

**Can you tell us a bit about your next writing project?**

I don’t want to talk about it just yet.

**How can readers find out more about you and follow your work?**

I have a website, lauramoriarty.net. I also have a Facebook page under Laura Moriarty-Novelist. My publicist says I’m supposed to be tweeting, but I can never remember my password, so I don’t. But people can always just email me at [laura\_moriarty@yahoo.com](mailto:laura_moriarty@yahoo.com). It’s nice to hear from readers.

**Recommended Reading**

*The Center of Everything*

*The Rest of Her Life*

*While I’m Falling*

*The Chaperone*

**Laura Recommends**

*Baby Jesus Pawn Shop,* Lucia Orth

*The Sharp Time,* Mary O'Connell

*My Almost Certainly Real Imaginary Jesus*, Kelly Barth

*Far from the Tree*, Andrew Solomon

Elizabeth Gilbert

*The Girl Who Fell From the Sky*, Heidi Durrow

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