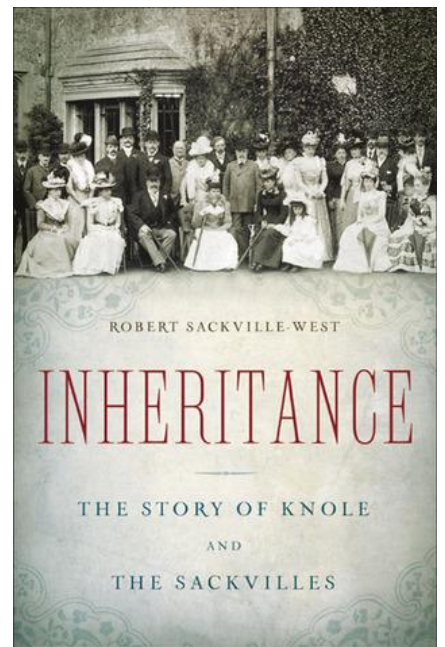


Reading Guide:

Inheritance:

The Story of Knole and the Sackvilles

Robert Sackville-West (2010)



1. Do you think that Robert Sackville-West drew upon his family's vast literary history in order to write the book?
2. The author has a wealth of primary source materials: letters, documents, account books, paintings, furniture, and Knole itself. Do you think he used these sources to accurately record the history of Knole? How rare do you think it is to have a complete history of a family, and home, dating back 400 years?
3. In Chapter 7, "Folly and Sense," Sackville-West claims that "The Sackvilles, once again, hovered on the periphery of power, participating – just – in the making of history." (pg 102) Do you think this is true? Do you think that the family was as involved in British history as Sackville-West purports them to be, or does it work hand in hand with the idea of "family myth?"
4. Do you think that as a member of the Sackville family, and inheritor of the title, that Robert Sackville-West can paint an accurate portrait of the family, home, and art it contains?
5. Inheritance focuses heavily on the concept of male primogeniture, and the family's continuation with the tradition. What are your thoughts on this? Who does this affect the most? Do you agree with Sackville-West's assertion that it actually creates a "fictional continuous ownership"?
6. By 1874, some 10,000 were visiting Knole every year, and today there are 80,000 visitors a year. How would you feel if there were 80,000 visitors to your house every year? Do you think that they can still achieve a relative sense of privacy?
7. Who is your favorite "owner" of Knole? Your least favorite? Why?
8. Have you ever visited Knole? From your own personal knowledge, does Inheritance reflect your previous knowledge about manor houses and English inheritances? Why or why not?

About Robert Sackville-West

After studying history at Oxford University, Robert Sackville-West worked in publishing, in 1985 founding Toucan Books, which creates illustrated nonfiction books for the international market. He now combines that with chairing Knole Estates, the property and investment company that runs the Sackville family's interests at Knole. In 2008, he, his wife, and three children moved into the house, which has been occupied by the Sackville family for four hundred years.¹

Other related texts:

- ***Knole (National Trust Guidebooks)*** Robert Sackville-West (2006) | A look at the Sackville family home, Knole.
- ***Sissinghurst, An Unfinished History: The Quest to Restore a Working Farm at Vita Sackville-West's Legendary Garden*** (2010) Adam Nicolson | A journey to make the gardens produce lunch for the two hundred thousand annual visitors.
- ***Portrait of a Marriage: Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson*** (1998) Nigel Nicolson | A look at the misunderstood marriage of Vita and Harold.
- ***The Edwardians*** (2003) Vita Sackville-West | A novel that reflects on the true life of Vita Sackville-West.
- ***Snobs*** (2006) Julian Fellowes | A novel by the *Gosford Park* screenwriter that takes a look at the English aristocracy.
- ***Up and Down Stairs: The History of the Country House*** (2010) Jeremy Musson | An exploration of the hierarchy of English country houses from the Middle Ages to the 20th Century.
- ***Sandringham Days: The Domestic Life of the Royal Family in Norfolk, 1862-1952*** (2012) John Matson | A window into the lives of the British Royal family and their private lives on a country estate.
- ***Aristocrats: Power, Grace, and Decadence: Britain's Great Ruling Classes from 1066 to the Present*** (2010) Lawrence James | A history of the supremacy of Britain's ruling classes and hereditary lines.
- ***Orlando: A Biography (1928)*** Virginia Woolf | A novel based on the life of Vita Sackville-West, one of Virginia Woolf's lovers.

¹ Courtesy of *Inheritance: The Story of Knole and the Sackvilles*