Last Christmas in Paris: A Novel of World War I

by Hazel Gaynor and Heather Webb



About the Book

August 1914. England is at war. As Evie Elliott watches her brother, Will, and his best friend, Thomas Harding, depart for the front, she believes --- as everyone does --- that it will be over by Christmas, when the trio plan to celebrate the holiday among the romantic cafes of Paris.

But as history tells us, it all happened so differently?

Evie and Thomas experience a very different war. Frustrated by life as a privileged young lady, Evie longs to play a greater part in the conflict --- but how? --- and as Thomas struggles with the unimaginable realities of war, he also faces personal battles back home where War Office regulations on press reporting cause trouble at his father?s newspaper business. Through their letters, Evie and Thomas share their greatest hopes and fears --- and grow ever fonder from afar. Can love flourish amid the horror of the First World War, or will fate intervene?

Christmas 1968. With failing health, Thomas returns to Paris --- a cherished packet of letters in hand --- determined to lay to rest the ghosts of his past. But one final letter is waiting for him?

Discussion Guide

1. Women?s roles changed dramatically through the course of WWI. What are your thoughts about Evie?s place in the war, at home and in France? Which factors came into play to cause these changes?

2. How did WWI affect societal structures and values? Are the effects still felt today?

3. Newspapers were the main source of information for the public in WWI. How do you feel about the War Office encouraging positive messages through propaganda while also suppressing the worst details of the war from the Front?

4. Thomas blamed himself for the decimation of his troops in 1916 at the battle of the Somme. Do you believe he --- or any officer leading a battalion --- is responsible for the loss of human life?

5. There was much controversy surrounding shell shock, or war neurosis, during this time. Soldiers were initially made to believe they were weak or "lacking moral fibre." What are your thoughts about this, especially in terms of how we treat PTSD today?

6. Letters were of vital importance during WWI as they were the only means of communication between loved ones. What were your emotional reactions when reading these letters?

7. Do you still write letters? Would you like to see a return to traditional letter-writing?

8. Do you think Will?s mother was right to conceal the truth about his child from the rest of the family? What do you suppose were her motives?

9. Christmas is a time for family and reflection. What are your favorite family Christmas traditions?

10. Evie, Will, Thomas and Alice plan to spend Christmas in Paris. Where would you love to spend Christmas, if not at home?

Author Bio

Hazel Gaynor is an award-winning, *New York Times*, *USA Today*, *Irish Times* and internationally bestselling author known for her deeply moving historical novels which explore the defining events of the 20th century. Her novel, THE LAST LIFEBOAT, was a *Times* historical novel of the month, an Audie award winner, and was shortlisted for the Irish Book Awards. Her work is published in 27 territories to date. She lives in Ireland with her family.

Last Christmas in Paris: A Novel of World War I

by Hazel Gaynor and Heather Webb

Publication Date: October 3, 2017
Genres: Fiction, Historical Fiction
Paperback: 400 pages
Publisher: William Morrow Paperbacks
ISBN-10: 0062562681
ISBN-13: 9780062562685