

# Paris in Love: A Memoir

by Eloisa James



## About the Book

In 2009, *New York Times* bestselling author Eloisa James took a leap that many people dream about: she sold her house, took a sabbatical from her job as a professor of Shakespeare and moved her family to Paris. **Paris in Love: A Memoir** chronicles her joyful year in one of the most beautiful cities in the world.

## Discussion Guide

1. Eloisa sold the house and the cars, uprooted her family, and travelled all the way to France in reaction to a cancer diagnosis (though not a life-threatening one). Have you experienced a similar life-changing event? What could you do to experience the same sort of cathartic experience without going to the extreme of packing up and moving abroad?
2. Imagine that you decided to sell many of your belongings and move to a foreign country. What would you pack and what would you keep? What would be the pros and cons for your children? Would living abroad or divesting your belongings cause you the most anxiety?
3. Domitilla and Anna carried on a months-long battle, only to end up best friends. Eloisa speculates that the rapprochement came about because the girls are similarly rambunctious, bossy, and funny . . . and because they were both excluded by the "Queen Bee." Must best friends have similarities, in your view? Have you ever formed a friendship with someone who you had once believed was your enemy?
4. There are a number of poignant side-stories in *Paris in Love*, among them the Romanian homeless man and his puppy, the love story of Florent and Pauline, and the story of the Camondo family during World War II. What was the one story you responded to most strongly?
5. After bra shopping for herself and Anna, Eloisa concludes that her year in Paris should be declared the "Year of the

Brassiere.? Do you associate specific articles of clothing with happy memories in your life? What garment from your past do you still remember with affection --- even one as small as the Minnesota hat that bobbles its way through Paris on Anna?s head?

6. Many readers adore the love story of Pauline and Florent. Some two years later, they are very happy together and thinking of starting a family. Do you know of any love stories that originated with such a sweet, romantic gesture as the lemon tart? How about in your own life --- what?s the most romantic thing that?s ever happened to you?

7. Elizabeth Gilbert, the author of **Eat, Pray, Love**, said that she ?absolutely loved? **Paris in Love**. Like Eloisa, Gilbert came home transformed by her travels. Why do you think that major life changes can impel people to travel? If you could spend a year anywhere in the world, where would you go?

8. Of course, **Eat, Pray, Love** was turned into a wonderful movie starring Julia Roberts. If you were in charge of casting the film version of **Paris in Love**, who would you pick to play Eloisa? Or Alessandro? (Hint: Alessandro would like to be portrayed by Johnny Depp.)

9. Anna announces (with a wail) that her parents promised they?d stay in France only one year --- ?and it?s been two years at least.? Time seems to move slowly when we?re young?faster as we grow older. What do you remember about being eleven-years-old? Were you fighting with your classmates, happy with your environs, thrown into a new situation?

10. Is it possible to fall in love with a place in the same way we fall in love with people? Have you ever been to Paris, and if so, did you fall in love with it (or better yet, fall in love with someone while there)? How was your experience different from or similar to Eloisa?s?

11. Eloisa has a gift for conjuring tiny pictures of the world, as when she describes (on page 108) snowflakes that ?float sideways, looking fluffy and indecisive, as if they belong in another part of the world and are falling here by accident.? What?s your favorite description in the book?

12. Paris in Love originated as updates for Eloisa?s friends and fans, posted on Facebook and Twitter. In what ways do you think that social media have made the world a smaller, more intimate place? Or do you think the opposite is true?

13. Eloisa insisted on keeping much of the book in small paragraphs, so as to keep the feeling of tiny bursts of experience. Did this format work for you, or would you have preferred a more conventional narrative structure?

14. The story of Luca?s sixteenth birthday is arguably the funniest in the book, despite its moments of unhappiness. (As someone once put it, ?Comedy is tragedy plus time.?) A lot of readers say they laughed all the way through the piece. Did it remind you of any stories from your own life --- mortifying at the time, but afterwards could now be laughed at?

15. Eloisa?s friend Rose died during the year that Eloisa lived in Paris. But Eloisa picks up Rose?s invitation --- ?It?s so beautiful here; you must come before you die? --- and hands it on to her readers. What is ?here?? Or, rather, where is ?here?? Does Eloisa mean that you should travel --- or something else?

## Author Bio

Eloisa James has published over 30 historical romances, many of which have hit the bestseller lists. She also wrote a bestselling memoir, *PARIS IN LOVE*, as well as a contemporary novel, *LIZZIE AND DANTE*. Her books are published in 28 languages and 30 countries, from Slovakia to Sweden. Worldwide, she has approximately seven million books published in print or electronically. She lives in New York City and Florence, Italy.

After graduating from Harvard University, Eloisa got an M.Phil. from Oxford University, a Ph.D. from Yale and eventually became a Shakespeare professor, publishing an academic book with Oxford University Press. Her "double life" as a professor and romance writer is a source of fascination to the media and her readers. In her professorial guise, she's written a *New York Times* op-ed defending romance, as well as articles published everywhere from women's magazines such as *More* to writers' journals such as the *Romance Writers' Report*.

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