

The Librarians of Lisbon: A WWII Story of Love and Espionage

by Suzanne Nelson



About the Book

Lisbon 1943. As two American librarians are drawn into a city of dangerous subterfuge and unexpected love affairs, they are forced to choose between their missions and the men they love. Inspired by real historical figures, award-winning author Suzanne Nelson pens a captivating story of two remarkable women, their bravery and heartache, and a friendship that withstands the ravages of war.

WWII rages Europe. Lisbon stands alone as a glamorous city on the brink of chaos, harboring spies trading double-edged secrets. Among them are Selene Delmont and Beatrice Sullivan, Boston librarians turned Allied operatives. Officially enlisted to collect banned books, both women are undercover agents tasked with infiltrating the Axis spy network.

Victory is not guaranteed.

Soon, they're caught up in games of deception with two of Lisbon's most notorious men --- the outcast Portuguese baron, Luca Caldeira, and the lethal spy, code name Gable. As Selene charms her way through lavish ballrooms with Luca, the more bookish Bea is plunged into Gable's shadowy world of informants. But when a betrayal unravels a carefully spun web of lies, everything they've fought for is thrown into jeopardy. As Selene and Bea are pushed to their breaking points can their friendship, and their hearts, survive the cost of war?

Discussion Guide

1. Bea and Selene have very different personalities and motives for joining the war effort. Compare and contrast their initial feelings about traveling to Lisbon with how they each feel about the war at the conclusion of the book. How do their motives change over the course of the story? Have you ever made a life-changing decision based on motives you

questioned afterward? How did your perspective change and why?

2. Secret identities play a pivotal role in *THE LIBRARIANS OF LISBON*. How do the characters' feelings about their subversive roles evolve over the course of the story? How do these roles impact their fates?

3. How do Selene and Bea defy the gender expectations of their time? What about the other women in the novel, like Marguerite, Helen or Nora? How have expectations regarding women's roles in wartime changed since World War II? What role might you have wanted to take in fighting the war had you been alive during that time?

4. Portugal was one of just a few countries that remained neutral during World War II. As you read *THE LIBRARIANS OF LISBON*, what did you discover about the cost of neutrality? Did the advantages of neutrality outweigh the disadvantages? Why or why not? What do you think the outcome of the war might have been if Portugal had sided with the Allied or Axis powers?

5. Each of the heroines in *THE LIBRARIANS OF LISBON* experience a transformative love. How are Bea's and Selene's romantic relationships similar or different? How does love affect the outcome of the story? Has love ever transformed you or led you down an unexpected path? If so, how?

6. Discuss the scene in which Bea prevents Selene from following Gable, Luca and André down to the beach on the night of Luca's death. Would you have made the same decision as Bea? Why or why not? What does the choice she makes reveal about her personality?

7. Throughout *THE LIBRARIANS OF LISBON*, characters are forced to lie to one another to protect themselves, their missions, or those they love. How do each of the characters pay a price for these lies? What are the benefits to their deceptions? Have you ever told a lie to protect someone you love? Are there times when lies might be justified? If so, why?

8. Friendship plays a vital role in Selene's and Bea's fates. How did their friendship impact their stories? How did their actions hurt and/or help each other throughout the book? Have you ever had to forgive a close friend for hurting you or betraying your trust? How were you able to move past it and repair the friendship? If you were Selene, would you have forgiven Bea? Why or why not?

9. Of the characters in the book, which one did you find yourself able to relate to the most? Why? Which characters did you find the most difficult to relate to? Which character's fate did you find the most surprising? The most poignant?

10. What did you learn about Lisbon and World War II from this book that you didn't know before? Are there any people or subjects you'll explore further as a result of your reading? What will you remember most about *THE LIBRARIANS OF LISBON*?

Author Bio

Suzanne Nelson is the award-winning author of dozens of middle-grade novels, including *YOU'RE BACON ME*

CRAZY, which was adapted into a romantic comedy movie for the Hallmark Channel. Her YA novel, SERENDIPITY'S FOOTSTEPS, was a Sydney Taylor Honor Book. She has written articles about parenting for *The Washington Post*, and teaches writing workshops for adults and children. She loves reading and writing historical fiction and traveling for inspiration and research.

She was born in New Jersey and grew up in Southern California. She received her BA from Texas A & M University and her MA from New York University. She spent eight years as a children's book editor in New York City before turning to writing full time. She now lives with her family in Ridgefield, Connecticut. THE LIBRARIANS OF LISBON is her adult fiction debut.

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