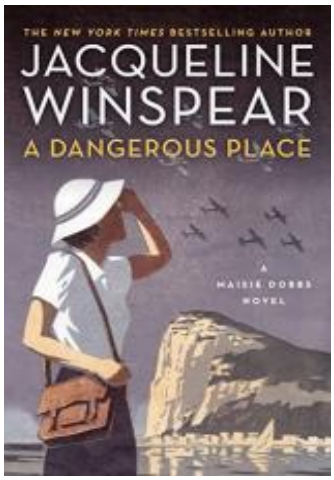
ReadingGroupGuides
The online community for reading groups

A Dangerous Place: A Maisie Dobbs Novel

by Jacqueline Winspear



About the Book

Maisie Dobbs returns in a powerful story of political intrigue and personal tragedy: A brutal murder in the British garrison town of Gibraltar leads the investigator into a web of lies, deceit and danger.

Spring 1937. In the four years since she left England, Maisie Dobbs has experienced love, contentment, stability --- and the deepest tragedy a woman can endure. Now, all she wants is the peace she believes she might find by returning to India. But her sojourn in the hills of Darjeeling is cut short when her stepmother summons her home to England: Her aging father, Frankie Dobbs, is not getting any younger.

On a ship bound for England, Maisie realizes she isn?t ready to return. Against the wishes of the captain who warns her, ?You will be alone in a most dangerous place,? she disembarks in Gibraltar. Though she is on her own, Maisie is far from alone: The British garrison town is teeming with refugees fleeing a brutal civil war across the border in Spain.

And the danger is very real. Days after Maisie?s arrival, a photographer and member of Gibraltar?s Sephardic Jewish community, Sebastian Babayoff, is murdered, and Maisie becomes entangled in the case, drawing the attention of the British Secret Service. Under the suspicious eye of a British agent, Maisie is pulled deeper into political intrigue on ?the Rock? --- arguably Britain?s most important strategic territory --- and renews an uneasy acquaintance in the process. At a crossroads between her past and her future, Maisie must choose a direction, knowing that England is, for her, an equally dangerous place, but in quite a different way.

Discussion Guide

1. What factors --- geographical, emotional or others --- help explain why Maisie Dobbs settles in Gibraltar?

2. What are the various internal and external dangers that Maisie faces in this time and place?

3. Maisie is reluctant and feels ?ill equipped? to investigate the death of Sebastian Babayoff, ?but could not help herself.? What are her various motivations?

4. What additional elements are added to the story because the victim is a member of Gibraltar?s Sephardic Jewish community?

5. Maisie is said to wish to ?unpick the knitting? of her previous four years and the recent profound tragedies she?s experienced. What might this mean?

6. The trauma experienced at the death of her husband and child have Maisie?s ?blood running colder, hardening her heart.? How does this affect her behavior during the investigation?

7. Maisie believes that investigating the murder of Sebastian Babayoff ?would help her excavate something inside herself.? What might this be? How might this process work?

8. Examine the complex politics of the time, as explained by Professor Vallejo. How does one go about determining, as Maisie tries to, who is on the side of good? In what ways do even the defenders of the good seem to act questionably?

9. Of particular importance to Maisie?s stability is meditation. How does it serve her? Why does it require ?courage? to practice?

10. Consider the various women in the novel --- Miriam, Priscilla, Mrs. Bishop, Francesca Thomas, Sister Teresa. What does each bring to the novel? What?s the role of each in a time of war?

11. For Maisie, ?solitude was her soul?s hermitage.? What does this mean? To what extent is solitude important? At what point might it be unhealthy?

12. What important insights and lessons recalled from Maurice Blanche help Maisie?

13. Maisie remembers Maurice?s idea that physical place ?changes a person?s perspective.? How does this work? How might the landscape of Gibraltar affect Maisie or others?

14. Considering Sebastian and a young photographer she sees in Madrid, Maisie wonders about the relationship between photographer and subject. Is viewing a subject through a camera lens a different kind of seeing? What are its benefits or dangers?

15. Maisie compassionately encourages Miriam to consider herself and suggests it will help her to better help others. What is a proper balance between tending to oneself and helping others?

16. What is the significance of Maisie?s intense experience with the nurses? Why does she choose to return to Sister Teresa before going home to England?

Author Bio

Jacqueline Winspear is the author of the *New York Times* bestsellers THE CONSEQUENCES OF FEAR, THE AMERICAN AGENT and TO DIE BUT ONCE, as well as 15 other bestselling Maisie Dobbs novels, and THE CARE AND MANAGEMENT OF LIES, a Dayton Literary Peace Prize finalist. Jacqueline has also published two nonfiction books: WHAT WOULD MAISIE DO? and a memoir, THIS TIME NEXT YEAR WE'LL BE LAUGHING. Originally from the United Kingdom, she divides her time between California and the Pacific Northwest.

Critical Praise

?A series that seems to get better with each entry.?

A Dangerous Place: A Maisie Dobbs Novel

by Jacqueline Winspear

Publication Date: February 23, 2016
Genres: Fiction, Historical Fiction, Historical Mystery, Mystery
Paperback: 336 pages
Publisher: Harper Perennial
ISBN-10: 006222056X
ISBN-13: 9780062220561