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The Lions of Fifth Avenue

by Fiona Davis



About the Book

In nationally bestselling author Fiona Davis' latest historical novel, a series of book thefts roils the iconic New York Public Library, leaving two generations of strong-willed women to pick up the pieces.

It's 1913, and on the surface, Laura Lyons couldn't ask for more out of life --- her husband is the superintendent of the New York Public Library, allowing their family to live in an apartment within the grand building, and they are blessed with two children. But headstrong, passionate Laura wants more, and when she takes a leap of faith and applies to the Columbia Journalism School, her world is cracked wide open. As her studies take her all over the city, she finds herself drawn to Greenwich Village's new bohemia, where she discovers the Heterodoxy Club --- a radical, all-female group in which women are encouraged to loudly share their opinions on suffrage, birth control and women's rights. Soon, Laura finds herself questioning her traditional role as wife and mother. But when valuable books are stolen back at the library, threatening the home and institution she loves, she's forced to confront her shifting priorities head on...and may just lose everything in the process.

Eighty years later, in 1993, Sadie Donovan struggles with the legacy of her grandmother, the famous essayist Laura Lyons, especially after she's wrangled her dream job as a curator at the New York Public Library. But the job quickly becomes a nightmare when rare manuscripts, notes and books for the exhibit Sadie is running begin disappearing from the library's famous Berg Collection. Determined to save both the exhibit and her career, the typically risk-averse Sadie teams up with a private security expert to uncover the culprit. However, things unexpectedly become personal when the investigation leads Sadie to some unwelcome truths about her own family heritage --- truths that shed new light on the biggest tragedy in the library's history.

Discussion Guide

1. Laura Lyons, despite her husband?s protests, wants to be a wife, a mother and a dedicated journalism student. Do you

think women still face societal pressure today to only fill traditional roles? Do you think it?s possible to ?have it all??

2. The NYPL is very important to both Laura and Sadie. Is the library important to you? What role do you think your local library plays in your community?

3. How does Sadie?s character challenge stereotypes about librarians? Before reading this book, did you know the different roles they play in serving the public?

4. How did going to the Heterodoxy club change Laura? Do you see similar organizations at work today? What is the importance of having spaces where women can voice their opinions, stories and plans for the future?

5. What do you think of how Laura handles the situation after she finds out the identity of the book thief?

6. Losing the only copy of his manuscript is a devastating blow to Jack. Do you think the act of burning the manuscript was justified? Why or why not? How do you think technology has changed the value we put on the written word?

7. In her note, Laura writes that ?it was all ultimately her fault, that her own actions initiated a cascade of tragedies.? Why do you think Laura believes she is responsible? Do you agree? Would things have been different if so much responsibility in the home didn?t fall only to Laura?

8. At the trial, Sadie argues for a harsher sentence for the book thief because what was stolen was more than a number of pages worth a certain amount, but ?pieces of Western history and culture that have a dramatic impact...the loss of these items is a detriment to all of humanity.? Do you agree that the thief should receive a longer sentence? Given these items are priceless, do you think that locking them away is a viable solution? If not, why do you think it?s important for the public to have access to these items?

9. Why do you think Sadie was so closed off from people? In part, she used her grandmother?s life as a justification for her own. What do you think finding out about Laura?s real life did for Sadie?

10. Laura struggles with her conflicting commitments to school and the Heterodoxy club. Do you think she did the right thing? Would you have done the same? Why do you think it was important to the women of the Heterodoxy club to keep their discussions private? Why wouldn't they want their ideas disseminated?

Author Bio

Fiona Davis is the *New York Times* bestselling author of several historical fiction novels set in iconic New York City buildings, including THE STOLEN QUEEN, THE MAGNOLIA PALACE, THE ADDRESS and THE LIONS OF FIFTH AVENUE, which was a Good Morning America book club pick. She's also the author of SAMANTHA: THE NEXT CHAPTER, the first legacy novel for American Girl. Her articles have appeared in publications like *The Wall Street Journal* and the *Oprah Magazine*.

She first came to New York as an actress but fell in love with writing after getting a master's degree at Columbia

Journalism School. Her books have been translated into over 20 languages, and she's based in New York City.

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