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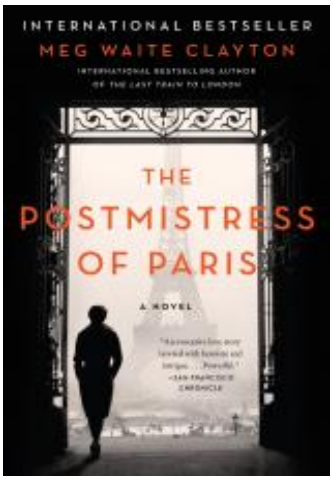
The Postmistress of Paris

by Meg Waite Clayton



About the Book

The *New York Times* bestselling author of THE LAST TRAIN TO LONDON revisits the dark early days of the German occupation in France in this haunting novel --- a love story and a tale of high-stakes danger and incomparable courage --- about a young American heiress who helps artists hunted by the Nazis escape from war-torn Europe.

Wealthy, beautiful Naneé was born with a spirit of adventure. For her, learning to fly is freedom. When German tanks roll across the border and into Paris, this woman with an adorable dog and a generous heart joins the resistance. Known as the Postmistress because she delivers information to those in hiding, Naneé uses her charms and skill to house the hunted and deliver them to safety.

Photographer Edouard Moss has escaped Germany with his young daughter only to be interned in a French labor camp. His life collides with Nanée?s in this sweeping tale of romance and danger set in a world aflame with personal and political passion.

Inspired by the real-life Chicago heiress Mary Jayne Gold, who worked with American journalist Varian Fry to smuggle artists and intellectuals out of France, THE POSTMISTRESS OF PARIS is the haunting story of an indomitable woman whose strength, bravery and love is a beacon of hope in a time of terror.

Discussion Guide

1. THE POSTMISTRESS OF PARIS has at its heart the story of a Chicago heiress who, instead of fleeing France after Hitler invaded, chose to stay. What do you think motivated her? Can you imagine doing what she did yourself?

2. Another main story arc in this novel is that of prominent artists and writers who were interned by the French even

before Hitler invaded the country. Was that a surprise to you?

3. The French interned these artists and writers on the excuse that they might be spies for Hitler even though they were Jewish refugees who had had to flee the Reich? Do you think this excuse was sincere? Do you see any parallels in today?s immigration policies in the U.S. or elsewhere?

4. THE POSTMISTRESS OF PARIS takes readers from Paris to Amboise, Dinard, Chenonceaux, Marseille, Sanary-sur-Mer and the Pyrenees. Which would you most like to visit?

5. Did you love Dagobert?

6. THE POSTMISTRESS OF PARIS is told from three points of view: Nanée, Edouard and Luki. Did you like any of these narrators better than the others? Why do you think the author chose to use three different points of view, and why these three?

7. The story is inspired by the efforts of Varian Fry and those like Mary Jayne Gold, who worked with him, to rescue prominent artists and writers from Nazi-occupied and Vichy France. Why do you think the author chose to tell a fictionalized version of the story rather than a straight history?

8. The novel is rich with Surrealist art, and especially surrealist photographs. Which did you find the most fascinating? The most evocative? Which, if any, would you like to own?

9. The novel raises the question why any one life --- like that of an artist --- ought to be valued above any other. What do you think?

10. Edouard and Luki are forced by circumstance first to flee Germany for Austria, then Austria for France, then France for the United States. If you put yourself in their shoes, what do you think would be the hardest part of leaving your own home?

11. Edouard?s single photo called *Nude Bending, The Ghost Wife* and *Salvation* echoes again and again throughout THE POSTMISTRESS OF PARIS. What did you see in it, and did you think of it as one or the other?

12. Several other physical things pop up every now and then throughout the novel: Nanée?s fur cuff bracelet, her suit, and Luki?s baby Kangaroo, which goes missing. What did you make of these?

13. Did the ending of the story ring true? What do you imagine happened in the years that followed?

Author Bio

New York Times bestselling author and book club favorite Meg Waite Clayton is the author of nine novels, most recently the instant *USA Today* bestseller TYPEWRITER BEACH and the international bestsellers THE POSTMISTRESS OF PARIS and THE LAST TRAIN TO LONDON. Her books have been published in 24 languages, and have been finalists

for the Bellwether Prize (now the PEN Bellwether), the National Jewish Book Award, and the Langum Prize. She also writes for major newspapers and magazines, mentors in the OpEd Project, and is a member of the National Book Critics Circle and the California bar. She lives in California and Connecticut.

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Publication Date: October 11, 2022
Genres: Fiction, Historical Fiction
Paperback: 416 pages
Publisher: Harper Paperbacks
ISBN-10: 0062946994
ISBN-13: 9780062946997