ReadingGroupGuides
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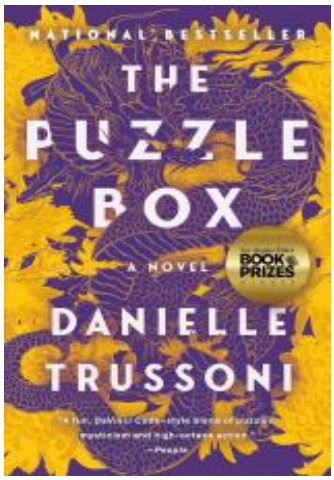
The Puzzle Box

by Danielle Trussoni



About the Book

Two sisters. A lost imperial treasure. The world?s greatest puzzle master has 24 hours to solve the most dangerous mystery of his life...or die trying, in ?[this] breathlessly paced and nail-bitingly suspenseful? (*Booklist*) novel from the *New York Times* bestselling author of THE PUZZLE MASTER, hailed as ?thrilling? by David Baldacci.

It is the Year of the Wood Dragon, and the ingenious Mike Brink has been invited to Tokyo, Japan, to open the legendary Dragon Box.

The box was constructed during one of Japan?s most tumultuous periods, when the samurai class was disbanded and the shogun lost power. In this moment of crisis, Emperor Meiji locked a priceless Imperial secret in the Dragon Box. Only two people knew how to open the box --- Meiji and the box?s sadistic constructor --- and both died without telling a soul what was inside or how to open it.

Every 12 years since then, in the Year of the Dragon, the Imperial family holds a clandestine contest to open the box. It is devilishly difficult, filled with tricks, booby traps, poisons and mind-bending twists. Every puzzle master who has attempted to open it has died in the process.

But Brink is not just any puzzle master. He may be the only person alive who can crack it. His determination is matched only by that of two sisters, descendants of an illustrious samurai clan, who will stop at nothing to claim the treasure.

Brink?s quest launches him on a breakneck adventure across Japan, from the Imperial Palace in Tokyo to the pristine forests of Hakone to an ancient cave in Kyushu. In the process, he discovers the power of Meiji?s hidden treasure and --- more crucially --- the true nature of his extraordinary talent.

Discussion Guide

1. How does Mike Brink?s unique ability with puzzles influence his character and decisions? What are some key moments that highlight his growth?

2. How does the author build suspense and intrigue throughout the story? What techniques does she use to keep readers engaged?

3. What did you think about the setting? What knowledge of Japan did you have before reading, and how did the book challenge or support it?

4. What did you think of Ume and Sakura? How did their relationship evolve throughout the story? What impact does it have on the narrative?

5. The novel weaves in elements of history and culture. How do these aspects enhance the story? Are there specific historical or cultural references that you found particularly interesting or relevant?

6. What are the main conflicts in the novel, and how are they resolved? Were there any resolutions that surprised you or felt particularly satisfying?

7. How do themes of female leadership, expertise and power play out in the story? How do these themes affect the female characters and their actions?

8. How do puzzles and games function within the narrative? Are they merely plot devices, or do they hold deeper significance for the characters and themes?

9. What were some of your favorite moments or scenes in the book? Why did they stand out to you?

10. Are there any recurring symbols or motifs in the novel? How do they contribute to the overall themes and messages of the story?

11. Based on the novel?s ending, what do you think might happen next for the characters? Are there any unresolved questions or potential future developments you would like to see explored?

Author Bio

Danielle Trussoni is the *New York Times* bestselling author of the novels THE PUZZLE BOX, THE PUZZLE MASTER, THE ANCESTOR, ANGELOLOGY and ANGELOPOLIS, and the memoirs THE FORTRESS and FALLING THROUGH THE EARTH, named one of the 10 best books of the year by *The New York Times Book Review*. She writes the monthly horror column for the *New York Times* Book Review. A graduate of the Iowa Writers? Workshop and winner of the Michener-Copernicus Society of America Fellowship, her work has been translated into more than 30 languages.

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