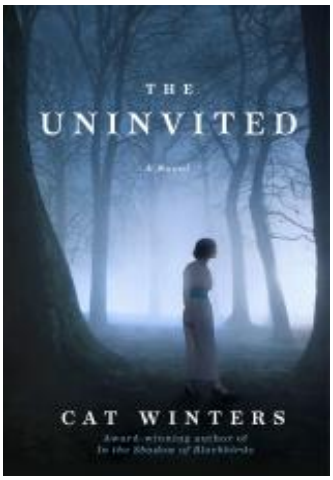
ReadingGroupGuides
The online community for reading groups

The Uninvited

by Cat Winters



About the Book

Twenty-five year old Ivy Rowan rises from her bed after being struck by the flu, only to discover the world has been torn apart in just a few short days.

But Ivy?s life-long gift --- or curse --- remains. For she sees the uninvited ones --- ghosts of loved ones who appear to her, unasked, unwelcomed, for they always herald impending death. On that October evening in 1918 she sees the spirit of her grandmother, rocking in her mother?s chair. An hour later, she learns her younger brother and father have killed a young German out of retaliation for the death of Ivy?s older brother Billy in the Great War.

Horrified, she leaves home, to discover the flu has caused utter panic and the rules governing society have broken down. Ivy is drawn into this new world of jazz, passion and freedom, where people live for the day, because they could be stricken by nightfall. But as her ?uninvited guests? begin to appear to her more often, she knows her life will be torn apart once more, but Ivy has no inkling of the other-worldly revelations about to unfold.

THE UNINVITED is an atmospheric, haunting and utterly compelling novel.

Discussion Guide

1. Fictional newspaper clippings appear throughout THE UNINVITED. To what extent do these journalistic accounts of life during October 1918 enhance Ivy?s descriptions of the time period? How would the novel differ without the inclusion of the newspaper excerpts?

2. Talk of ghosts, specters, and spirits pervade the novel, but what most haunts Ivy? What (or who) is the most frightening aspect of the book?

3. When Mrs. Rowan asks her husband if he and their son killed a man, Mr. Rowan responds, ?That wasn?t a man. He

was a German.? What factors most contributed to their decision to kill? How do modern hate crimes compare to those of 1918 America?

4. Ivy, once a recluse, aims to spread her wings and soar. May, a Chicago girl who has already tasted quite a bit of life, has withdrawn into her home. How important is it that these two women cross paths? How would Ivy?s experiences have been different if she hadn?t chosen to live with May?

5. Why are Ivy and Daniel drawn to each other, despite her initial prejudices against Germans and his knowledge of her family?s guilt? How do they influence each other?

6. Jazz music is present throughout all of Ivy and Daniel?s encounters. During their first moment of intimacy, Ivy says, ?We were music. We were jazz. We were alive.? What does music mean to each of them? How does music affect their relationship?

7. What impact do Nela and Addie have on Ivy? What lessons do they teach Ivy?

8. Flashbacks to Ivy?s childhood and high school years appear throughout THE UNINVITED. What is it about Ivy?s past that seems to affect her the most? Does she seem eager to escape her past, or to understand it?

9. Initially, Ivy doesn?t react well when Daniel describes his experiences in Belgium. Are her reactions justified? How did you react to his confessions?

10. Ivy first becomes aware that all is not as it seems when Daniel says, ?I can?t ever leave this goddamned building.? At what point did you begin to suspect the central secret in the book? How would re-reading the novel change your experience with the book?

11. In one of the final chapters, Addie tells Ivy, ?We?re just going to be numbers in the newspaper. ?Statistics,? as my daddy called it.? How would the portrayal of flu deaths in THE UNINVITED have differed if the dead were simply mentioned as statistics? What was your initial response to the way the author chose to portray the deaths?

12. How would we, in our modern era, react to a pandemic the size of the 1918 influenza compared to the way in which people in 1918 reacted?

13. When encountering Frank Rowan, the only words Daniel chooses to say to him are ?I understand.? What does he mean by this statement?

14. Is the final scene a happy or a tragic one? Why?

15. To whom does the title THE UNINVITED most seem to refer?

Author Bio

Cat Winters's debut novel, IN THE SHADOW OF BLACKBIRDS, was released to widespread critical acclaim. The

novel has been named a finalist for the 2014 Morris Award, a School Library Journal Best Book of 2013 and a Booklist 2013 Top 10 Horror Fiction for Youth. Winters lives in Portland, Oregon, with her husband and two children.

Critical Praise

?THE UNINVITED is an affecting novel, dark in fiction and in fact. Set in 1918 against the parallel epidemics of the Spanish influenza and an equally terrifying strain of ?superpatriotism,? Cat Winters? latest offers resonant characters, a stunning twist, and an emotional, satisfying conclusion.?

The Uninvited

by Cat Winters

Publication Date: August 11, 2015
Genres: Fiction, Historical Fiction, Romance, Supernatural Fiction
Paperback: 368 pages
Publisher: William Morrow Paperbacks
ISBN-10: 0062347330
ISBN-13: 9780062347336