

BOOK CLUB KIT

FALLEN FOR FRANCE

A NOVEL

ELIZABETH LETTS



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Beddou, Estelle, Thomas, Hassan, and Jean-Baptiste all begin the novel with very different ideas of what makes a meaningful life. Before war changes them, whose worldview felt most familiar to you, and which assumptions proved the least sustainable?
2. Early in the novel, Louhou tells Beddou, “*True love is more like a piece of rock embedded in the dirt. It calls no attention to itself, but it sticks, it stays. Turn your gaze from the dancing stalks of wheat and look for the humble rocks.*” How does this idea reshape the way you think about the novel’s relationships—not only romantic love, but loyalty, friendship, and devotion?
3. Throughout the opening sections, horses are treated as companions, livelihoods, symbols of status, and even moral guides. How does the novel use Tassa and the other horses to reveal qualities in the people who care for—or exploit—them?
4. Hassan spends much of the novel trying to become the man Beddou already believes he is. How did his relationship with Beddou transform your understanding of Hassan, and what does the novel suggest about redemption?
5. Many characters spend years searching—for family, home, redemption, belonging, or purpose. Which search resonated with you most, and why do you think stories about searching remain so compelling even when the outcome is uncertain?
6. Estelle tells Thomas, “*Love calls us to the things of this world. This world. The one we’re in, even if we don’t like it.*” How does this idea influence the choices both characters make over the course of the novel? Are they ultimately drawn toward each other, toward duty, or toward something larger than either?
7. The novel unfolds through five interconnected perspectives that move between France and Morocco over several years. How did that shifting structure affect your experience as a reader? Did seeing the same events from different viewpoints change your understanding of the characters or the war itself?
8. Throughout the novel, Thomas wrestles with what it means to show mercy—to wounded horses, to soldiers, to himself, and ultimately to the people he loves. How does his understanding of compassion evolve, and what moments best illustrate that change?
9. Jean-Baptiste repeatedly mistakes possession for love—whether of land, horses, or people. What do you think the novel is saying about the difference between owning something and truly caring for it? Did your understanding of his character change as his story unfolded?
10. Near the end of the novel, Thomas and Estelle return to Shakespeare: “*Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds, or bends with the remover to remove...*” Why do you think this sonnet becomes such an important touchstone for them? In what ways does the novel affirm—or complicate—its vision of enduring love?
11. By the novel’s conclusion, several characters never receive all the answers they seek, yet they still find ways to move forward. What does *Fallen for France* suggest about the relationship between hope and uncertainty? Is closure necessary for healing?
12. In her Author’s Note, Elizabeth Letts explains that the novel grew from discovering a brief reference to a Moroccan horse in the records of a World War I veterinary hospital and became a way to honor overlooked people whose stories have largely faded from history. After finishing the novel, whose story or perspective—whether a colonial soldier, a nurse, a volunteer, or another character—do you feel most deserves to be remembered, and why?



CHARACTER NAME PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

Accent on the syllable in capital letters.

Aisha ----- EYE·sha

Abdullah ----- AB·duh·luh

Beddou ----- BED·doo

Louhou ----- LOO·hoo

Hassan ----- HAH·san

Estelle ----- es·TELL

Jean-Baptiste -- dzha·bapTEEST

Léo ----- LAY·oh

Thomas ----- TOM·uhs



MOROCCAN BEGHIR (Thousand-Hole Pancakes) with fresh mint tea

Throughout *Fallen for France*, food offers moments of comfort, hospitality, and human connection amid extraordinary hardship. One memorable scene features beghir, Morocco's beloved "thousand-hole" pancakes, served with honey to welcome guests. Pair them with fresh Moroccan mint tea for a simple treat inspired by the novel.

Moroccan Beghîr Makes about 12 pancakes

Ingredients

- 1 cup fine semolina flour
- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon instant yeast
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 cups warm water

For serving

- ¼ cup melted butter
- ¼ cup honey

Directions:

1. Combine the semolina, flour, baking powder, yeast, sugar, and salt in a blender.
2. Add the warm water and blend until completely smooth.
3. Let the batter rest for 20–30 minutes, until slightly bubbly.
4. Heat a nonstick skillet over medium heat. Pour about ¼ cup batter into the center of the pan. Do not spread it.
5. Cook on one side only until the surface is covered with tiny holes and completely dry. Do not flip.
6. Stir together the melted butter and honey, then brush generously over the warm pancakes.

Serve immediately with hot Moroccan mint tea.

Moroccan Mînt Tea

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon Chinese green tea (gunpowder tea is traditional)
- 1 large handful fresh mint
- 4 cups boiling water
- 3–4 tablespoons sugar, or to taste

Steep the tea for 3–5 minutes, then add the mint and sugar. Traditionally, the tea is poured from a height to create a light froth and to blend the flavors.



PLAYLIST

Nuvole Bianche
Ludovico Einaudi

Holocene
Bon Iver

Only Time
Enya

Anchor
Novo Amor

Comptine d'un autre été
Yann Tiersen

Ya Rayah
Rachid Taha

Lamma Bada Yatathanna
Jordi Savall & Hespèrion XXI

The Host of Seraphim
Dead Can Dance

Aicha
Khaled

Spirit Cold
Tall Heights

La Vie en Rose
Édith Piaf

**Les feuilles mortes
(Autumn Leaves)**
Yves Montand

The Book of Love
Peter Gabriel

Bloom
The Paper Kites

The Night We Met
Lord Huron

Saturn
Sleeping at Last

To Build a Home
The Cinematic Orchestra

Near Light
Ólafur Arnalds

The Last Goodbye
The Kills

Run Cried the Crawling
Agnes Obel

Experience
Ludovico Einaudi

Awake
Tycho

Heartbeats
José González

**Je te laisserai
des mots**
Patrick Watson

Hoppípolla
Sigur Rós

All My Days
Alexi Murdoch

Mystery of Love
Sufjan Stevens

Ends of the Earth
Lord Huron

**Flightless Bird,
American Mouth**
Iron & Wine

Your Hand in Mine
Explosions in the Sky



BOOK CLUB ACTIVITY: Bring an Object

Throughout *Fallen for France*, ordinary objects become extraordinary vessels of memory. Amber beads, letters, medals, books, photographs, and even a horse's saddle carry stories across countries, generations, and decades.

Before your discussion, invite each member of your book club to bring one small object that they would choose if they had only a few moments to leave home.

As each person shares their object, consider discussing:

- Why did you choose this particular item?
- What memories or relationships does it represent?
- If someone found this object a hundred years from now, what story would it tell about your life?
- Which object from *Fallen for France* stayed with you most, and why?

Like the amber beads that pass from hand to hand throughout the novel, even the simplest keepsake can become a reminder of love, resilience, and the enduring connections that survive long after history has moved on.