SALLY BRADY'S ITALIAN ADVENTURE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How is Sally shaped by having been put on a train by her parents at age 11? Did they do the right thing in sending her away?
2. Sally has three important women in her life: her mother, Patsy, and Clio. How does each of them influence who she becomes?
3. What role does nationality play in the novel for Sally, Alessandro, and Lapo? How else is identity important for the characters before, during, and after the war?
4. Discuss the importance of family in each of their lives. Which character's family is closest to your own?
5. Morality vs. safety is a major theme in the novel. Can you be a good person in wartime? Was Sally right to kill the soldier on the bridge? Was Lapo right to run a camp for political prisoners? What resonances do you see with the moral dilemmas around war that we still face today?
6. Lapo is forced to write a story that Mussolini hopes will distort history. Discuss the power of stories to shape society as seen in this novel, in other novels you have read, and in our world today.
7. Thinking about Lapo's escalating problems in the book, how far would you go to keep your family safe? Is Lapo a good man or not? What about Favagrossa? Are there any truly "good" or "bad" characters in the story?
8. Is this a coming-of-age story? How does Sally change in the course of the novel? Discuss how her idea of "home" changes during the story.
9. On page 144 Lapo wants to reach through time and talk to people who witnessed the fall of the Roman Empire, and in Prague Alessandro thinks about what it means to be a witness to history. Sally says to Clio "the history books are all about men" (page 203). Does it surprise you to learn that at one point in the writing process, the novel was set in the year 2041? What aspects of the story would be true in any era?
10. Sally Brady is modeled on the kind of classic adventure novel that's almost always told from a male point of view: *The Odyssey*, *Candide*, *A Tale of Two Cities*. How was it different to read an adventure story from a young woman's point of view?
11. There are many minor characters in the novel: Toad, Alba, Ciano, Roghi, the Thirteen, Giuliano and Ilaria, Pappone, Alessandro's sisters, and more. Who is the most memorable for you and why?
12. Discuss the title of the novel and how it's echoed on page 342 when her boss says "Sally had quite the Italian adventure." What does that say about women's experiences in wartime?
13. Food plays a central role in the novel for everyone—which food scenes are most memorable for you and which foods are most central to your life and why?



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