



A Train in Winter

By Caroline Moorehead
ISBN: 9780061650703

Introduction

In January 1943, 230 women of the French Resistance were sent to the death camps by the Nazis who had invaded and occupied their country. This is their story, told in full for the first time—a searing and unforgettable chronicle of terror, courage, defiance, survival, and the power of friendship. Caroline Moorehead, a distinguished biographer, human rights journalist, and the author of *Dancing to the Precipice* and *Human Cargo*, brings to life an extraordinary story that readers of Mitchell Zuckoff's *Lost in Shangri-La*, Erik Larson's *In the Garden of Beasts*, and Laura Hillenbrand's *Unbroken* will find an essential addition to our retelling of the history of World War II—a riveting, rediscovered story of courageous women who sacrificed everything to combat the march of evil across the world.

Questions for Discussion

1. What is the importance of women's friendship in *A Train in Winter*? How is it shown, what forms does it take, and what difference does it make to the lives of the women described in the book?
2. How has this book changed your view of World War II, the French Resistance, the role of women in wartime, the Holocaust, or another subject discussed in the book?
3. Caroline Moorehead takes care in the book to tell individual stories. Which of these had the greatest impact on you while reading the book, and why?
4. What motives for the women's resistance work are presented in *A Train in Winter*? Are their reasons the same as those of men?
5. What will you remember about *A Train in Winter*?
6. If you could ask one of the survivors of the Convoi des 31000 a question about her experiences, what would it be?
7. Why do you think the history discussed in *A Train in Winter* was buried for so long?
8. What do you think was behind "attentisme"—holding on, waiting, doing nothing—the initial French reaction to the Occupation?
9. The women of the Convoi des 31000 longed to come home from the camps—but then those few who did so found their return to be sometimes impossibly hard. Why was this the case?
10. What lessons should we learn from *A Train in Winter*?
11. What role did the Communist Party play in the French Resistance? How were perspectives on it altered, first by the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, and then by the German invasion of the Soviet Union?
12. Debate the issue of French collaboration with the Nazi authorities as it is described in the book. What do you think you would do if you were placed in some of the situations Caroline Moorehead describes?
13. What do you make of the turn in recent historical writing to "microhistories" of individual moments and stories, rather than grand abstract narratives? Which kind of historical writing do you prefer, and why?
14. If you could invite Caroline Moorehead to your book club discussion, what would you like to ask her about *A Train in Winter*, and why?

Copyright 2011 Random House of Canada Limited.

About the Author

Caroline Moorehead is the biographer of Bertrand Russell, Freya Stark, Iris Origo, and Martha Gellhorn. Well known for her work in human rights, she has published a history of the Red Cross and an acclaimed book about refugees, *Human Cargo*. Her previous book was *Dancing to the Precipice*, a biography of Lucie de la Tour du Pin. She lives in London and Italy.