



My Dear I Wanted to Tell You

By Louisa Young
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Introduction

The onrush of World War I irrevocably intertwines the lives of two young couples in Louisa Young's epic tale of love in the midst of chaos. Her moving novel of class struggles, star-crossed romance, and the grim reality of the battlefield is a stunning exploration of the devastating consequences, physical and spiritual, of a world enmeshed in Total War.

Questions for Discussion

1. To what extent does Riley's class influence his behavior, and the behavior of others throughout the novel?
2. How does Riley's attitude to the war change as the novel progresses?
3. Do you think the actions of Riley and his reasons for going to war were good ones and do you think society has learnt lessons from the atrocities that occurred, or is it still happening today?
4. Do you think society's attitude to going to war today (ex: Afghanistan) differs from the attitude at the time of the First World War?
5. "Julia had learnt to love her own beauty, because beauty was currency, and other people valued it so highly." Discuss how this view of Julia's influences her behavior throughout the novel.
6. Compare her experiences of plastic surgery with those of Riley's. Is feeling ugly on the inside really that different to looking ugly on the outside?
7. "A girl needs a good reputation, these days more than ever. Art school is for times of peace and plenty, not for unmarried girls in wartime." Consider this advice that Nadine's mother gives her. How does this symbolize society's attitude to women, and does the war change this view in the novel?
8. The title of the novel is taken from a standard-issue field postcard that soldiers had to fill in during the war - Riley fills in one such field postcard. Consider the ways we communicated with our loved ones then compared to now.

About the Author

Louisa Young grew up in London in the house in which Peter Pan was written. She studied modern history at Cambridge and was for many years a freelance journalist, working mostly for the motorcycle press, Marie Claire, and the Guardian. She lives in London and Italy with her daughter and the composer