
Kennebecasis Public Library – Book Club Program

Librarian: Madaline Boutilier

Email: Madaline.boutilier@gnb.ca **Phone:** (506) 849-5314 and ask for her.

Please let Kirstin know which book(s) are selected so she can contact Madaline to reserve the book(s) the club wants to read next.

Date of the next meeting: Thursday, August 28, at 1:30PM.

Lilac Girls, by Martha Hall Kelly

About the Author: Martha Hall Kelly is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *Lilac Girls*, *Lost Roses*, *Sunflower Sisters*, and *The Golden Doves*. Born and raised in Massachusetts, she was inspired to write this novel by her mother's family, the Smiths, who settled on Martha's Vineyard in 1891. She received journalism degrees from both Syracuse and Northwestern universities and worked as an advertising copywriter for many years before becoming a novelist. With more than two million copies of her books sold and translated in fifty countries, Martha Hall Kelly splits her time between Litchfield, Connecticut, Hobe Sound, Florida, and New York City.

A) Here are 15 discussion questions to help kick-off discussion. Members can take turns reading the question aloud.

- 1.** In what ways do you think the alternating points of view helped to enrich the narrative? Was there ever a time you when you wished there was only one narrator? Why or why not?
- 2.** The primary settings of this novel are starkly different --- Caroline's glamorous New York world of benefits and cultural events, and the bleak reality of life in a concentration camp. In what ways did the contrast between these two settings affect your reading experience?
- 3.** Caroline's relationship with Paul is complicated, taboo even, was there ever a time when you didn't agree with a choice Caroline made with regards to Paul? When and why?
- 4.** As Caroline became more and more invested in her work with the French Families Fund, and eventually with the "rabbits", did you feel that she changed in

any way? How were those changes apparent through her interactions with others?

5. Throughout their time in Ravensbruck, Kasia and the other prisoners found subtle, and not so subtle, ways to demonstrate their resistance. Discuss the variety of actions they took. Which of them did you find to be most powerful? Most moving? Most effective?
6. When Kasia learned that they were hunting “rabbits” on page 278 she thought “Just don’t feel anything. If you are to live, you cannot feel.” Do you agree with this statement? What do you think it says about the nature of survival? Is it relevant to any other characters in the book, not just the prisoners?
7. Did you find Herta to be a sympathetic character? Why or why not?
8. When Vilmer Hartman came to visit Ravensbruck he showed concern for Herta’s mental state. What do you think this revealed about her character? Had you previously thought about any of the points he made?
9. Though the Nazis made sure the German people only got their news from one media point of view, Herta’s father continues to read as many newspapers as he can. Does this relate to media today?
10. Did you feel that Halina’s ring was an important symbol in the book? How did Herta feel about the ring? Why did she keep it?
11. Throughout the novel, in and out of Ravensbruck, the characters experience harrowing, difficult situations. Was there one that you found more memorable than the others? Why do you think the author chose to include it?
12. If you had to come up with a single message or lesson to represent each of the main characters’ experiences --- Caroline, Kasia, Herta --- what would it be and why?
13. Many of the themes explored in LILAC GIRLS --- human rights, political resistance, survival --- are a direct result of the historical WWII setting. How are those themes relevant to current events today?
14. LILAC GIRLS also touches on a number of interpersonal themes including female friendship, mother-daughter relationships, love, infidelity, mental health, and more. How do these themes impact the characters’ lives?

15. What do you think the author hoped her readers would take away from this reading experience?

B) Book questions and discussion from Book Club Members.

C) Discussion and choosing of the next book to read (by popular vote).

July: Lilac Girls by Martha Hall Kelly

August: TBD

D) Writing Prompts Exercise

Immediately following Book Club, partake in a writing exercise called "Prompts".

How it works: A title is chosen, we write on that title for 10 minutes, then stop. The results can be surprising, satisfying and shocking! If anyone wants to read their piece to the group, they can, but there is no pressure to do so. We may try 2 or 3 prompts, depending on time and enjoyment. All Book Club members are welcome to stay for this writing exercise. All you need is pen and paper.
