

THE LANE WINSLOW MYSTERIES BY IONA WHISHAW

General Reading Questions

1. The character of Lane Winslow was inspired by Iona's mother who spent some time as wartime spy. Are there any characters in this series who remind you of someone in your own life? Why?
2. Lane is bound by the Wartime Secrets Act and must keep her activities as a spy a secret for decades after the war, even from her husband. Famously, women were treated as mere wives and helpmeets by their husbands, who never learned how brilliant their wives had been in perceived "male spheres." How difficult would it have been to be the woman in these marriages? Do you think you could keep a secret like that in your own life?
3. We may be biased, but we think that this series would make a pretty great TV show. Who would you cast as Lane, Darling, and Ames? What about Kenny and Eleanor?
4. Certain scenes and even major plot lines in this series have been inspired by questions asked or comments made by readers and fans—for instance, we learn about the teenage years of the Hughes sisters in *An Old, Cold Grave* because a fan asked Iona about them at a reading, and Terrell rides a motorcycle because of a fan letter that Iona received suggesting he could provide expertise if she was so inclined to include one. If you could suggest a plot point for a new book in the series, what would it be?
5. Lane gets herself into trouble just as often as she gets herself out of it. Are there scenes when you find yourself yelling at Lane "don't do that!" or "don't go in there!" or "wait for backup, Lane!" What personal strengths does Lane call on when she is in these situations?
6. This series illuminates quite a lot of Canadian postwar history. Iona writes about Russian interference in *Death in a Darkening Mist* and *A Deceptive Devotion*, home children in *An Old, Cold Grave*, the National Unity Party in *A Sorrowful Sanctuary*, and the forced migration of the Sinixt people in *Framed in Fire*. What is the most surprising aspect of Canadian history that you've learned from Lane Winslow?
7. This series has been praised for addressing social issues—racism, xenophobia, domestic violence, sexual abuse, feminism—that are still current today. What storyline were you most surprised to encounter in *King's Cove / Nelson* in the late 1940s?

Death in a Darkening Mist (#2)

1. During the war Britain mobilized the entire population to help with the war effort, in particular women. Lane's skills in languages led her to be drafted into espionage. In this book there are flashbacks to one of Lane's missions in 1943. If you had lived in this period, do you think you would have volunteered to work as a spy? What are some wartime jobs that would have been preferable?
2. Andrews is a character who on the surface appears handsome, successful and even heroic, and was extremely popular and athletic as a teenager. He might be called "entitled" today. What are the ways that such easy success might not prepare a character for the challenges of real life, or real relationships?
3. Lane rescues herself and Sylvia from a car about to go over a cliff. Darling later says to her, "You were very brave." And she retorts, "It's not in the least brave not to want to die." What is the nature of "bravery" and what are some other ways that Lane might be called "brave"?

