



The Next Chapter

Susan Goldstein

Book Groups / Newsletter / Literary Consulting

Winter 2023-2024 Season

Beyond That, The Sea

By Laura Spence-Ash

Discussion Guide

Author

Novel Structure

Evacuation

Domestic Life in London During the Blitz

Postal Chess

Characters

Discussion Questions

- 1- How did the passage of time in the novel affect your reading experience? What about the multiple character perspectives?
- 2- Why do you think the author included Millie's and Reginald's perspectives rather than focusing on only Bea and the Gregorys?
- 3- The Maine house plays a significant role in the Gregorys' lives. What does Maine represent for the three children? Does it change as they grow older?
- 4- Living in London during the war was much different than living in Massachusetts. How did these two distinct settings impact the characters and their choices?
- 5- We see Bea grow into a teenager, a young adult, and finally, a 30-year-old. What changes did you notice in her personality over the years?
- 6- During the war, Ethan and Reginald take up correspondence and begin playing chess via postcards. Was this connection a surprise to you? Why do you think the author built this friendship?
- 7- Even in the beginning, there was a distance between Beatrix and her mother, Millie. How much of the distance in Beatrix's adult life do you think is because Reginald, her father, let her think it was Millie's decision to send her away to America? Do you think the relationship would have been different if Beatrix had known the truth much earlier?
- 8- Imagine you were Bea's parents, living in London during the war. Would you have sent your child to America?
- 9- How would you feel if you were the family accepting a young girl from another country into your family?
- 10- How did grief impact each character differently? Did you empathize with some characters' grief over that of others?
- 11- "What's past is prologue" from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* is repeated throughout the novel. How do you think Bea, William, and Gerald interpreted this quote?
- 12- Gerald tells Rose, "William was always searching for the next thing, you know that. Maine wouldn't have helped." What do you think William was always searching for? Do you think he ever found it?

Additional Materials

Books:

See You After the Duration by Michael Henderson

Don't Forget to Write by Pam Hobbs

I Go By Land, I Go By Sea by P.L. Travers

All the Light We Cannot See by Anthony Doerr

The Waves by Virginia Woolf

The Splendid and the Vile: A Saga of Churchill, Family and Defiance During the Blitz by Erik Larson

Articles:

<https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1939/09/01/issue.html>

<https://www.nytimes.com/1998/10/11/nyregion/revisiting-world-war-ii-refuge-7-sent-britain-children-return-their-haven.html>

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/the-evacuated-children-of-the-second-world-war>

<https://www.chess.com/article/view/world-war-ii-and-chess>

<https://www.vice.com/en/article/nzgdbz/the-spy-who-checkmated-me-why-postal-chess-was-banned-during-wartime#>

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1940/09/21/living-through-the-blitz>

Video:

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/the-evacuated-children-of-the-second-world-war>

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Postcard for international correspondence chess

During WWII, 150,000+ people sought shelter in London's Tube stations each night. Over time, the various stations developed their own mini-governments.



Londoners taking shelter in the Tube during the Blitz, via Wikimedia Commons



English mothers kiss their children goodbye in London, Sept. 1, 1939, as the youngsters are placed aboard trains by the thousands to be taken into the countryside, away from German air raids on the city. (AP)

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