



Somewhere in France

By Jennifer Robson
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Questions for Discussion

1. If you had the chance to grow up as the daughter of Lord and Lady Cumberland knowing that you would live in unimaginable luxury but would also be denied an education, the chance to work, and very likely the chance to choose your own spouse would you do it?
2. Do you feel Lady Cumberland's treatment of Lilly is motivated by sincere concern for her daughter's welfare? Or is it a case of her obsessively adhering to the conventions of aristocratic society, no matter the cost?
3. Do Robbie's motivations in pushing Lilly away after the bombardment of the 51st make sense to you? Do you sympathize with him or do you think he allows tunnel vision to cloud his judgment?

4. What about Lilly's motivations? Is she right to insist on staying at the 51st no matter what? Wouldn't it be reasonable for her to compromise and take up a position elsewhere in France?
5. Before reading *Somewhere in France*, if someone had mentioned the First World War to you, what would have come to mind? Has your perception of the First World War changed as a result?
6. *Somewhere in France* is set in the recent past, a century ago. Were there any aspects of life in the novel that surprised you by their modernity? Did its characters feel familiar to you, or more like inhabitants of "a different country," to paraphrase a well-known description of the past?
7. Do you think Robbie and Lilly's relationship would have been possible without the war and the changes it brought to British society?
8. Do you think it really would have been possible for Lilly to become friends with women like Annie and Bridget? Could such a disparity in wealth, privilege, and class truly be bridged in that era?
9. How do you think Lilly and her friends were changed by their experiences in the WAAC? Would it have been easy for them to return to ordinary life and the status quo after the war?
10. Do you think the war still matters? Why? It was fought a century ago, every one of its veterans is now dead, and memories of it are fading from our collective consciousness. Should we just leave it to the professional historians and concentrate on more recent events?