

Reading Guide

The Girl from The Savoy

William Morrow Paperbacks

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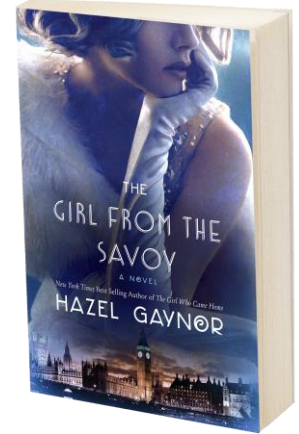
Introduction

Dolly Lane is a dreamer; a downtrodden maid who longs to dance on the London stage, but her life has been fractured by the Great War. Memories of the soldier she loved, of secret shame and profound loss, by turns pull her back and spur her on to make a better life.

When she finds employment as a chambermaid at London's grandest hotel, The Savoy, Dolly takes a step closer to the glittering lives of the Bright Young Things who thrive on champagne, jazz and rebellion. Right now, she must exist on the fringes of power, wealth and glamor—she must remain invisible and unimportant.

But her fortunes take an unexpected turn when she responds to a struggling songwriter's advertisement for a 'muse' and finds herself thrust into London's exhilarating theatre scene and into the lives of celebrated actress, Loretta May, and her brother, Perry. Loretta and Perry may have the life Dolly aspires to, but they too are searching for something.

Now, at the precipice of the life she has and the one she longs for, the girl from The Savoy must make difficult choices: between two men; between two classes, between everything she knows and everything she dreams of. A brighter future is tantalizingly close—but can a girl like Dolly ever truly leave her past behind?



Questions for Discussion

1. The novel is set in the years just after the Great War when social boundaries were changing and women, especially, were fighting for greater independence. What did you enjoy about this period? Was there anything that surprised you?
2. Dolly's position as a chambermaid gives her access to the less well-known side of iconic hotels like The Savoy. What did you enjoy about the chapters where we go "behind the scenes" at the hotel?
3. The novel has a large cast of principal and supporting characters. Who was your favorite character, and why?

4. The working classes were often taken advantage of by their superiors during this period. What was your reaction to the scene between Dolly and her employer's nephew, and to the incident between Dolly and Larry Snyder?
5. The shame of an unwanted pregnancy and of being an unmarried mother was a very real issue in the 1920s. Were you surprised to learn about Dolly's pregnancy and her time at the Mothers' Hospital? What was your reaction when she discovers that Thomas is her child?
6. Perry and Dolly's relationship crosses the social divide and is unconventional in its nature. What were your thoughts as their relationship develops?
7. Loretta has everything that Dolly longs for and yet they both have secrets and are fighting their own private battles. Who were you rooting for, and why?
8. Loretta is an iconic star of the stage, adored by legions of fans everywhere she goes. How different do you think her experience of fame was from that experienced by female celebrities today?
9. There are many female friendships in the novel: Dolly and Clover, Dolly and the girls at the hotel, Dolly and Loretta, Loretta and Bea. Which was your favorite friendship to see develop? Why do you think female friendships were so important during this era?
10. Teddy returns from the war suffering from a severe form of shell shock, a very misunderstood condition during and after the Great War. What surprised you the most about Teddy's condition and treatment? How did the discovery that Dolly was Teddy's "nurse" affect your connection with them both?
11. The final scene at the train station in many ways mirrors the opening prologue. Did you want Teddy to stay at the end? What was your reaction when Dolly finds the book on the bench and reads his letter?
12. Ultimately, Dolly leaves for America without any romantic attachment in order to chase her dreams, and the epilogue offers an insight into her future. What would you like Dolly to have done in the intervening years?