



The Paris library

By Janet, Skeslien, Charles

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Genre and Subject

Women librarians -- Fiction World War, 1939-1945 -- France -- Fiction
Paris (France) -- Fiction Historical fiction
War fictionz

Synopsis

Based on the true Second World War story of the heroic librarians at the American Library in Paris, this is an unforgettable novel of romance, friendship, family and of heroism found in the quietest of places. Paris, 1939 -- Odile Souchet is obsessed with books, and her new job at the American Library in Paris -- with its thriving community of students, writers and book lovers -- is a dream come true. When war is declared, the Library is determined to remain open. But then the Nazis invade Paris, and everything changes. In Occupied Paris, choices as black and white as the words on a page become a murky shade of grey -- choices that will put many on the wrong side of history, and the consequences of which will echo for decades to come. Montana, 1983 -- Lily is a lonely teenage desperate to escape small-town Montana. She grows close to her neighbour Odile, discovering they share the same love of language, the same longings. But as Lily uncovers more about Odile's mysterious past, she discovers a dark secret, closely guarded and long hidden.

Author Biography

Janet Skeslien Charles is an award-winning author with over a decade's worth of roaming the streets of Paris and researching in its libraries. Her debut novel, *Moonlight in Odessa*, was published in ten languages and was awarded the Melissa Nathan prize and the Completement Livre prize in Strasbourg.

Originally from Montana, as a child she lived on the same street as a French war bride and was fascinated by the war stories of her French professor. Janet began to research *The Paris Library* when she worked as Programs Manager at the American Library in Paris. Until recently she taught in Paris, where she still lives.

Discussion Starters

1. Many historical fiction stories adopt the dual timeline format—why do you think that’s a popular choice for the genre?
2. Were you more engaged in one storyline over the other?
3. What do you like best about reading WWII historical fiction? Did you know about the American Library in Paris prior to reading this novel?
4. Why was it important for the librarians to continue to spread the love of reading during the war?
5. Let’s talk about the friendship between Odile and Lily—what did they both learn from each other? In what ways were they similar?
6. What was the rippling impact of Remy joining the French Army?
7. Odile begins a romance with Paul and thinks she has it all. But when did you start to suspect a darker side to Paul?
8. While Odile develops a close friendship with Margaret, she also is envious of her lifestyle. And when Margaret begins a relationship with a Nazi soldier, she’s horrified. What do you make of her complicated friendship with Margaret?
9. Margaret is eventually attacked by Paul and when Odile learns the truth—she leaves behind Paris forever to marry an American. What did you think of this decision by Odile to leave everything behind?
10. Will Odile ever reconnect with Margaret again?
11. Have you ever been to Paris?

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