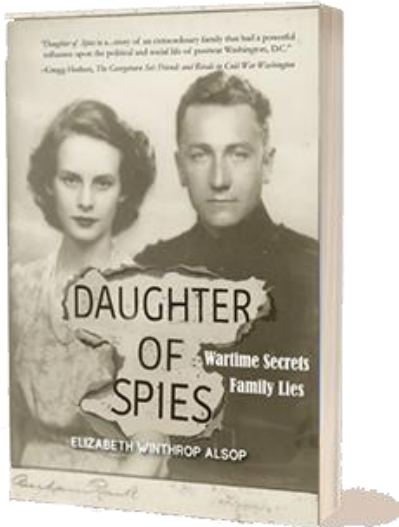


BOOK DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daughter of Spies: Wartime Secrets, Family Lies



The author's mother never talked about her past when her children were growing up. Do you think this is usual for parents in general or is it particularly typical for people who have lived through a war? Have you experienced this with your own parents?

In this memoir, the author uses a technique called a “braided narrative”, moving back and forth from her parents’ past to caring for her mother in the present day. Why do you think she chose this way of telling this particular story?

The author speaks often about her five brothers. What effect did growing up in the middle of a pack of boys have on her choices and decisions later in life?

The author uses both the present and the past tense in this book. Can you see a pattern in why and when she uses one over the other? What do those choices reveal about her feelings as she narrates each scene?

When the author consulted [William Zinsser](#), the author of *On Writing Well*, about this memoir, he [told](#) her that “she couldn’t write about both of her parents in the same book. You have to choose one.” The author has chosen to focus on her mother in this memoir. Would you have liked to hear more about other family members and if so, who? What questions would you pose to the author about these people?

[Tobias Wolff](#), author and memoirist, cautions writers “to take no care for their dignity” when they come to consider writing a memoir. “Don't be afraid of appearing angry, small-minded, obtuse, mean, immoral, amoral, calculating, or anything else.” Do you think this author “took no care for her dignity” in telling her story? In what scenes or chapters?

How does the author grow or change in the process of telling her family history? What does she come to learn not only about her parents but also about herself?