

# ***Maisie Dobbs: A Novel***

## **Additional Discussion Questions:**

On pages 13-15 of the Penguin Reader's Guide in the back of the paperback edition of the book, you will find 12 discussion questions, along with a 'Conversation with Jacqueline Winspear.' Below are a few additional questions you may want to discuss with your classroom. Since ***Maisie Dobbs: a Novel*** is essentially a coming of age story, students who are close to Maisie's age may be able to relate to her experiences in finding her way in the world. Many of these questions were inspired by that thought.

- 1) "*The feeling inside that she experienced when she saw the books was akin to the hunger she felt as food was put on the table at the end of the working day. And she knew that she needed this sustenance as surely as her body needed its fuel.*" (pg 87.) Discuss why you believe Maisie had this kind of 'hunger' for knowledge. Do you think it made a difference that she was part of the 'working class' of England? Maisie got up at 3 a.m. to continue her self-study before going to work. Would you have done the same in her circumstances? Why or Why not? How committed do you believe you are to pursuing your education? What sacrifices have you or your family made for your education?
- 2) "*Maisie...wrote a précis of what she had read, what she understood, and her questions.*" (pg 88.) Why do you believe Maisie took notes and studied in this way? Do believe Maisie was teaching herself how to learn?
- 3) Enid, the maid with whom Maisie shared her bedroom observed, "*And what you've got to remember, Dobbins, is that there's them upstairs, and there's us downstairs. There's no middle, never was. So the likes of you and me can't just move up a bit, if that's what you think. We've got to jump, Dobbie, and bloody 'igh to boot!*" (pg.98/99.) What point was Enid trying to underscore to Maisie about English class system in the early 1900's?
- 4) "*...Maisie was also beginning to feel fully the challenge of following her dream.*" (pg. 118) To what does this passage refer? Do you believe Maisie could have anticipated these issues?
- 5) In answer to Maurice Blanche's question about what she thought he did, Maisie replied, "*You heal people. That is, I think you heal people. In all sorts of ways. That's what I think.*" (pg 124) Although Maurice was indeed a physician, what do you think Maisie meant by her response? In what other ways did he heal people? Do you believe Maisie was able to do the same when she later took over Dr. Blanche's practice?
- 6) As Lady Rowan and Julian discuss Maisie's acceptance to Girton College, Julian remarks, "*... Remember, we may not have done her any favors, Rowan, Life can be very difficult for someone of her class at Cambridge.*" What do you think he meant?
- 7) When Maisie accidentally runs into Enid at the train station, Enid tells her, "*...And this war is changing everything. 'ave you noticed that? When the likes of me can earn a good living even in wartime, the likes of the better-offs will have to change, won't they?*" (pg 154.) What do you think Enid meant? Was she right? Did WWI change things, and if so, in what way? Do you believe Maisie would have been able to start a woman-owned investigation company as easily if WWI had not taken place? Why or why not?
- 8) "*Maisie...thought of Maurice, who had told her so many times that coincidence could simply be what it appeared to be: two events connected to each other by the thoughts and experience of a person. But he also told Maisie to pay attention to coincidence. Coincidence was a messenger sent by truth.*" (pg. 205) What do you believe Maurice meant by that statement?