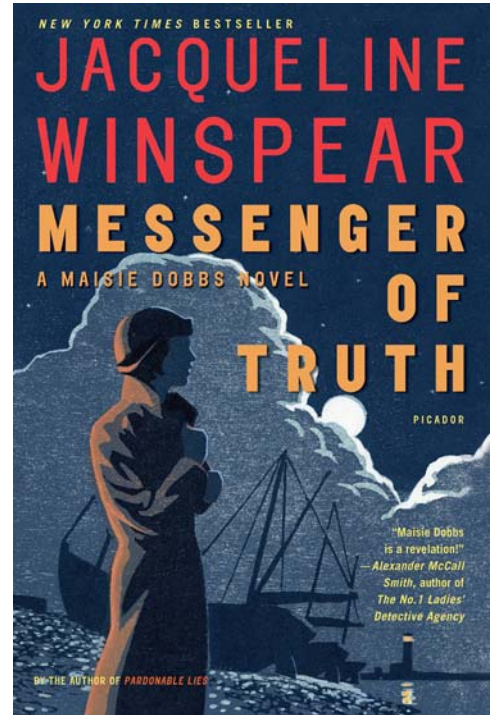


READING GROUP GUIDE

Messenger of Truth *A Maisie Dobbs Novel* *by Jacqueline Winspear*

ISBN-13: 978-0-312-426859
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About this Guide

The following author biography and list of questions about *Messenger of Truth* are intended as resources to aid individual readers and book groups who would like to learn more about the author and this book. We hope that this guide will provide you a starting place for discussion, and suggest a variety of perspectives from which you might approach *Messenger of Truth*.

About the Book

Maisie Dobbs investigates the mysterious death of a controversial artist—and World War I veteran—in the fourth entry in the bestselling series

London, 1931. The night before an exhibition of his artwork opens at a famed Mayfair gallery, the controversial artist Nick Bassington-Hope falls to his death. The police rule it an accident, but Nick's twin sister, Georgina, a wartime journalist and a infamous figure in her own right, isn't convinced.

When the authorities refuse to consider her theory that Nick was murdered, Georgina seeks out a fellow graduate from Girton College, Maisie Dobbs, psychologist and investigator, for help.

Nick was a veteran of World War I, and before long the case leads Maisie to the desolate beaches of Dungeness in Kent, and into the sinister underbelly of the city's art world.

In *Messenger of Truth*, Maisie once again uncovers the perilous legacy of the Great War in a society struggling to recollect itself. But to solve the mystery of Nick's death, Maisie will have to keep her head as the forces behind the artist's fall come out of the shadows to silence her.

Following on the bestselling *Pardonable Lies*, Jacqueline Winspear delivers another vivid, thrilling, and utterly unique episode in the life of Maisie Dobbs.

Praise for *Messenger of Truth*:

"In Maisie Dobbs, Jacqueline Winspear has given us a real gift. Maisie Dobbs has not been created--she has been discovered. Such people are always there amongst us, waiting for somebody like Ms. Winspear to come along and reveal them. And what a revelation it is!"—Alexander McCall Smith, author of *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency*

"Maisie is a sleuth to treasure."—*The New York Times Book Review*

"Worth cheering about . . . [Winspear] keep[s] her series about the astonishing Maisie Dobbs alive and as fresh as new paint."—*Chicago Tribune*

"When people ask me to recommend an author, one name consistently comes to mind: Jacqueline Winspear. . . . What makes Winspear so special is her ability to write convincing historical fiction. Going beyond the correct details about headgear and slang from the 1920s and 1930s, she convincingly captures the interior lives of her characters. . . . Wonderful."—*USA Today*

"Maisie Dobbs, Winspear's brilliant psychological investigator, returns for her fourth adventure. . . . Definitely more of a political and psychological read than a simple whodunit."—*Daily News*

"What makes this book delightful is how Winspear shows Maisie's emotional development amid the bitter legacy of the Great War. Her growing fan base should enjoy this latest entry. Strongly recommended."—*Library Journal*

About the Author

Jacqueline Winspear is the author of three previous Maisie Dobbs novels, *Maisie Dobbs*, *Birds of a Feather* and *Pardonable Lies*. Maisie Dobbs won the Agatha, Alex, and Macavity Awards, and *Birds of a Feather* won the Agatha Award. Originally from the U.K., Winspear now lives in California.

Discussion Questions

1. *Messenger of Truth* presents the problems of two very different families, the Beales and the Bassington-Hopes. What qualities make each family appealing? If they were real, which family would you rather associate with, and why?
2. How do the various physical settings of the novel — for instance, Nick's converted railway carriage, his parents' strangely decorated mansion, and Stig Svenson's gallery — contribute to the mood of the scenes that occur in those places?
3. In what ways is Maisie Dobbs, a woman with working-class roots who has found a home in an intensely logical profession, able to find common ground with the arty, aristocratic Bassington-Hope family? What hidden similarities attract her to Georgina and her dead brother?
4. After being wounded in the war, Nick Bassington-Hope helps the war effort by producing propaganda art, although he personally finds the war immoral and revolting. Is his performance of this work an honorable service to his country or a dishonorable betrayal of his own principles? Why?
5. Nolly Grant, the eldest of the Bassington-Hope children, is rude and dismissive when she meets Maisie, and she is generally seen as the odd person out in her family. How, despite these facts, does Winspear create sympathy for this initially cold and off-putting character?
6. In what ways do the relative ages of the Bassington-Hope children appear to influence their personalities and their interactions with one another?
7. In a rather poor attempt at humor, Harry Bassington-Hope calls Maisie one of Georgina's "Amazons." In what ways does Maisie's status as an independent woman work against her? On the other hand, are there ways in which her feminine approach to her work makes her more effective than a man would be in her position?
8. Were you surprised by the outcome of the subplot concerning Lizzie Beale? Why? What depth or dimension does this subplot add to the themes and structure the novel?
9. As a "messenger of truth," Nick Bassington-Hope creates art that is extremely realistic and literal, even down to using the faces of friends and family members in his paintings. In so doing he risks invading the privacy of his subjects. Does art need to be this literal and potentially intrusive to be effective? If not, why does Nick insist so strongly on this freedom? Do his artistic goals justify the private harm that he may cause?
10. A subtle though recurrent image in *Messenger of Truth* is the metaphor of the dance. Nick writes on one of his American sketches, "I can dance with life again." Maisie is literally reluctant to dance, but at the end of the novel, she adopts Nick's earlier statement, signaling a desire to reengage with the world. How does the imagery of the dance relate to the novel as a whole?

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