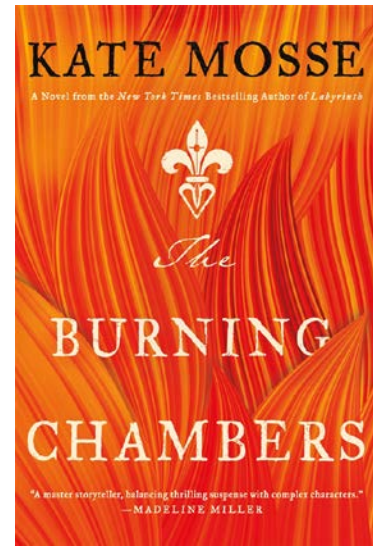


THE BURNING CHAMBERS

by Kate Mosse

About This Guide

The Burning Chambers is the first book in an epic new historical series from *New York Times* and internationally bestselling author Kate Mosse. Set in 1562 France, war sparks between the Catholics and Huguenots, dividing neighbors, friends, and family. The questions below are designed to enhance your reading group's conversation about *The Burning Chambers*.



Questions for Discussion

1. *The Burning Chambers* is an epic story that moves all over France: from Carcassonne, to Toulouse, to Puivert. Which of those settings resonated with you most strongly? How do the different cities—and the roles they play for our characters—contribute to the story author Kate Mosse is telling?
2. In *The Burning Chambers*, readers are introduced to many strong female characters who range widely in age. Our protagonist Minou is joined on the page by Madame Boussay, Celine Noubel, Blanche, Madame Montfort, and Alis. How does the inclusion of women of many different generations and backgrounds contribute to your understanding of France in the 1500s? Did the depictions of these widely varying women change any preconceived notions you may have had about the era?
3. When Piet and Vidal (later revealed as Valentin) first meet in *The Burning Chambers*, it is—on Piet's side at least—a reunion of good friends. As the story unfolds, however, these two become absolute enemies. How does their journey from friends to foes affect their stories and choices?
4. There is a moment when Minou is attempting to pull her Aunt Boussay away from the crowd in the procession in Toulouse when Madame Boussay is revealed not to be a silly, scatterbrained woman, but a victim of abuse. How does this change Minou's view of her aunt, and yours?
5. Piet and Minou's love story has echoes of Romeo and Juliet in many ways. He, a Huguenot from Amsterdam and she, a Catholic from Carcassonne. How does their trajectory match that of Shakespeare's famous lovers? In what ways does it diverge?
6. Throughout the novel, chapters are interspersed from the point of view of a mysterious (and clearly dangerous) woman. When did you first guess that Blanche and the

mysterious woman were one and the same? Did having some chapters from Blanche's point of view alter your understanding of her?

7. The Shroud of Antioch and its disappearance play a large role in this story. Though Piet, as a Protestant, should not believe in a relic, he finds himself unable to sell the Shroud to the highest bidder and instead keeps it hidden safely away. Do you agree with his reasoning for this? Were you surprised, in the end, by how quickly Aimeric gives it up to Vidal after so many years of Piet keeping it safe?
8. *The Burning Chambers* combines many different genres: historical fiction, romance, mystery, and thriller to name a few. Which of these genres felt the most dominant to you? How did the way they are woven together enhance the story?
9. The issue of religious tolerance looms large in *The Burning Chambers*. In what ways does the persecution of French Huguenots in the 1500s mirror other religious conflicts throughout history? What parallels does it have to our own time?
10. One of the things the Huguenots were fighting for was the right to read the Bible in their native tongue—French. The power of the written word is brought up several times, and is evidenced by Minou's upbringing and education and her father's work as a bookseller. How does the right to read and write in general tie in to the right to worship in French? Can you think of any examples throughout the story where the importance of books is made clear?