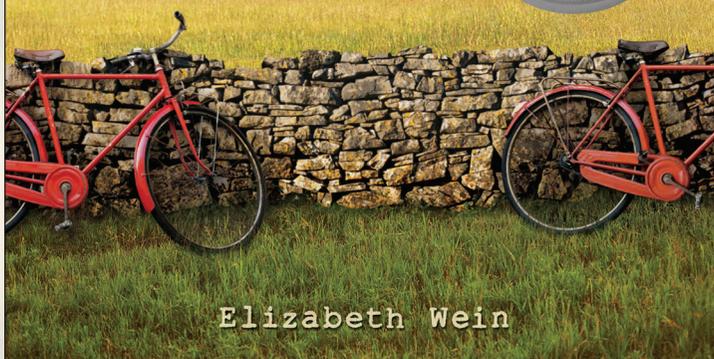"A fiendishly plotted mind game of a novel."
—*The New York Times*

THE *NEW YORK TIMES* BEST SELLER

CODE NAME VERITY

Elizabeth Wein

DISCUSSION GUIDE

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ABOUT THE BOOK

During the early days of World War II, two girls who never would have met in peacetime become best friends. Maddie is a mechanically inclined working-class girl from Manchester with a pilot's license. Julie is a well-educated Scottish aristocrat with a flair for the dramatic and the German language. The friends both serve the WAAF with distinction, but as the demands of war grow, they find positions that make better use of their talents—Maddie as a transport pilot for the ATA, and Julie as an SOE agent—code name Verity.

They soon find themselves on a vital mission into Nazi-occupied France. Yet nothing goes as planned. The plane is hit, "Verity" is missing after her parachute drop, and Maddie can't figure how she ended up with Verity's papers instead of her own identification. Forced into hiding with members of the French Resistance, Maddie battles her own fears and faces the possibility of never seeing her best friend again.

Verity, captured by the Gestapo, tortured and held prisoner in the very Nazi headquarters she was sent to infiltrate and destroy, agrees to collaborate. As she makes her confession, employing, as the brutal SS-Hauptsturmführer von Linden notes, "the literary conceits and techniques of a novel," Verity weaves her wartime secrets into the story of how she met Maddie. Tightly bound to a chair, an iron rail tied against her spine, Verity, desperate to buy more time, writes for her life.

COMMON CORE ALIGNMENT

This guide is aligned with the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards (CCR) for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language. Discussion questions and activities in this guide include a reference for the CCR strand and standard that is addressed. To scaffold and further support instruction, please reference grade-level appropriate Common Core State Standards.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Use the following activities to engage students in intentional, purposeful reading and learning experiences that contribute to their knowledge and understanding of the World War II era. While these activities could take place before starting the book, they can also be assigned throughout the reading of the novel, adding historic perspective on depicted events and providing opportunities to research items of student interest.

HEADED TO WAR

Have students form small groups to pool and document the knowledge they already have about World War II in an Inquiry Chart (I-Chart). Provide resources (online suggestions below) for them to research the gaps in their knowledge on the major causes, events, places, and political and military figures involved in this global conflict. Groups should present a general summary of what they've learned to the class.

• *BBC History: WWII* (**www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo**)
• *PBS: The War: Timeline of WWII* (**www.pbs.org/thewar/at_war_timeline_1939.htm**)
• *WWII: Behind Closed Doors* (**www.pbs.org/behindcloseddoors**)

(Reading: Key Ideas and Details: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1; Reading: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.9; Writing: Text Type and Purposes: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.2; Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.7, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.8; Speaking and Listening: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.4)

GET INTO CONTEXT

Student knowledge of the era before World War II likely centers on American history and culture. What would it have been like to grow up in the United Kingdom in the 1920s and 1930s? Encourage students to investigate and collect information to develop posters or virtual pinboards (Pinterest, etc.) on historical events, traditions and customs, and popular arts, music, and literature of the time. *(Reading: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7; Writing: Production and Distribution of Writing: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.6; Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.7, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.8)*

RHETORICAL POWER

Winston Churchill said, "In wartime, truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies." What does this mean? Allow students to discuss and then research the context of the British prime minister's words. *(Reading: Key Ideas and Details: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.3); Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.1; Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.7)*

BFF

Ask the class to brainstorm a list that identifies the qualities of a friend. How does a friend act? How do friends treat each other? How do they help each other? Encourage students to share their own personal experiences that illustrate these qualities during class discussion. *(Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.1)*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1 Why is SS-Hauptsturmführer von Linden keeping "Verity" alive and imprisoned at the Chateau de Bordeaux? Why do you think he is willing to give her so much time to write her confession? *(Reading: Key Ideas and Details: CCSS.ELA-Literacy. CCRA.R.1)*

2 At the beginning of *Code Name Verity*, "Verity" starts her confessional story from Maddie's perspective rather than her own. Why? In "Kittyhawk," part two of the book, the author changes narrators from "Verity" to Maddie. Does this change your expectations of what's going to happen? *(Reading: Craft and Structure: CCSS. ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.5, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.6)*

3 According to William Shakespeare in *The Tempest*, "misery acquaints a man with strange bedfellows." Metaphorically speaking, how is this quote relevant to the friendship between Julie ("Verity") and Maddie? *(Reading: Key Ideas and Details: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1)*

4 Who do you think switched Julie's and Maddie's identification papers? Why? *(Reading: Key Ideas and Details: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1)*

5 Throughout the book, the author makes a number of allusions and refers to many poets and authors. What are some of the most significant allusions? Do you think these literary and historical influences deepen your understanding of the characters? *(Reading: Craft and Structure: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.5)*

6 How well do we really get to know Julie ("Verity")? She ends her confession by repeating and repeating "I have told the truth." What truths has she shared? *(Reading: Craft and Structure: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.4)*

7 What are your impressions of Anna Engel? Is she a sympathetic character? Why or why not? *(Reading: Key Ideas and Details: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1)*

8 How do the roles of the female characters, especially Maddie, foreshadow the women's liberation and equal rights movements that would take place a generation after the war in Europe and the US? *(Reading: Key Ideas and Details: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1)*

9 Maddie makes a life-or-death choice that you will probably never have to face. Given a similar bond of friendship, what would you do if you were in a situation that required you to hurt someone you loved? *(Reading: Key Ideas and Details: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.3)*

10 In what ways is *Code Name Verity* relevant today, with regard to conflict and war? Has this novel changed the way you regard human suffering or changed the way you define courage? How? *(Reading: Key Ideas and Details: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1)*

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS
READING, WRITING, AND RESEARCHING

Expect a great deal of emotional response from students reading this book. Prepare for discussions about friendship and loyalty, death and dying, courage and cowardice, espionage and torture, and the effects of war on a country and its people. Historical fiction such as *Code Name Verity* encourages students to search for meaning in the past and will spark connections with history, geography, language arts, science, and arts curriculum.

DUTY ROSTER

While fictional, *Code Name Verity* gives insight into some of the real roles women had during World War II. Have some students select and research one of the various military or support positions Julie and Maddie held (switchboard operator, wireless operator, ATA pilot, special duties clerk, SOE agent, etc.). Ask another group of students to choose from other female characters in the book (Beryl, Dympna Wythenshawe, Anna Engel, Georgia Penn, Gabrielle-Thérèse (Mitraillette) Thibaut, Maman Thibaut, Damask, Esmé Beaufort-Stuart, etc.) and examine and research their war work or the jobs they held in order to do their part on the home front.

As students report what they've learned, compile the information into a duty-roster format that includes which character performed the job, her rank or job title, and her job duties. Students should also contribute to the completion of a roster column that details needed skills. Ask them to compare and discuss these roles and to consider what jobs would have been available for women with these skills if there had been no war.

Also ask students to research and discuss how military and home-front service differed for women in the United States during World War II. Discuss how women's roles have changed over time by comparing roles women played during World War II with their roles in a more recent military action, such as the Gulf War.

Resources:
- *BBC: WWII People's War* **(www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar)**
- *British Air Transport Auxiliary* **(www.airtransportaux.com)**
- *PBS: Women, War and Peace* **(www.pbs.org/wnet/women-war-and-peace)**

(Reading: Key Ideas and Details: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1; Reading: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.9; Writing: Text Type and Purposes: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.2; Writing: Production and Distribution of Writing: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.4; Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.7, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.8; Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA. SL.1); Speaking and Listening: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: CCSS.ELA-Literacy. CCRA.SL.4; Language: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.6)

SPY LANGUAGE
Trapped in France, Maddie is thrilled to be able to hear the BBC and expresses her amazement over what, at the time, was astonishing technology: "this link— all the hundreds of miles between us, field and forest and river and sea, all the guards and guns, bypassed in an eye blink." Ask students to consider and discuss how the characters' fates might have been different if they had had access to the digital communication technologies we use today. Talk too about the "codes" students themselves, may use daily with these technologies, such as text-message abbreviations, hashtags, and slang, and read examples.

Take the conversation further by having students work in pairs or small groups to develop a covert communications system of their own that is delivered via the Web or social-media platforms. Julie and her crew "crowded around the radio to hear our own code announced on the BBC—'*Tous les enfants, sauf un, grandissent*'—the random message that told our reception committee in France whom to expect that night." But the secrets your students hide about the Damask circuit amidst public information might be found in a Twitter feed or a YouTube video. Have them code and deliver four messages using the digital technology of their choice: "help is on the way"; "cover is blown"; "agent missing"; "mission accomplished". Even knowing what the messages are, can students crack the codes in one another's work? (*Reading: Key Ideas and Details: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.3; Writing: Production and Distribution of Writing: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.4, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.6; Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.1; Language: Knowledge of Language: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.3*)

ENHANCED INTERROGATION

Is torture wrong? After reading the intimate details of the treatment of prisoners held at the Château de Bordeaux, students may be quick to agree that torture is wrong. But in the face of war or terrorism, would students know how to draw the line between legitimate interrogation and torture if that difficult choice was theirs? To help students answer this question, increase their understanding of the use of torture by having them work individually or in small groups to design an infographic. Designing an infographic is a good exercise in research, and students should look for information about the historical use of torture, the justification of its use, changes over time in laws and popular opinion, accountability, reported incidents of torture, and even facts on torture tactics. To further explore the issue and discuss their feelings and opinions, encourage them to share what they've learned with poster sessions or a class discussion.

These resources can help students build background knowledge:
- *PBS Frontline: The Torture Question* (**www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/torture**)
- *Human Rights First* offers a variety of multimedia resources focusing on torture and the U.S. government (**www.humanrightsfirst.org/our-work/law-and -security/torture-and-accountability**)

- *Slate.com: What Is Torture?*
  (www.slate.com/features/whatistorture/introduction.html)
- *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* **(www.un.org/en/documents/udhr)**
- Search the *Amnesty International* library for reports on torture and ill-treatment
  (www.amnesty.org/en/library)
- *International Committee of the Red Cross: War and International Humanitarian Law*
  (www.icrc.org/eng/war-and-law/index.jsp)

TIPS FOR CREATING AN INFOGRAPHIC

As they collect information, students should collect links to make an interactive
bibliography as part of their infographic. Looking at other infographics for
inspiration will help students tell the story visually of the information they find. Try
www.informationisbeautiful.net or **www.coolinfographics.com**. Infographics can
be in a variety of formats. Have students take advantage of technology or draw their
own pictures, take their own photographs, etc.

TECHNOLOGY TOOLS FOR INFOGRAPHICS

- Wordle generates "word clouds" with your text **(www.wordle.net)**
- Free clip art from OpenClipArt **(www.openclipart.org)**
- Visual.ly's free infographic creation tool **(http://create.visual.ly)**
- Blockposters helps print any size image into any size wall poster
  (www.blockposters.com)
- Links for educators about infographics
  (www.schrockguide.net/infographics-as-an-assessment.html)

*(Reading: Key Ideas and Details: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1; Reading: Integration of
Knowledge and Ideas: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.8,
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.9; Reading: Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity:
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.10; Writing: Production and Distribution of Writing: CCSS.
ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.4, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.6; Writing: Research to Build
and Present Knowledge: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.7, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.8;
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.9; Speaking and Listening: Presentation of Knowledge and
Ideas: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.5)*

MERCY

Everyone makes decisions every day, mostly little, but sometimes very important and life-changing. Maddie has to face a number of big and sometimes difficult choices. Ask students to make a list of the decisions Maddie has to make in the book. Do they agree with her choices?

Divide the students and have the two groups prepare to debate Maddie's most difficult choice—ending Julie's life. Encourage them to extend the debate beyond Maddie's situation, explore the pros and cons of euthanasia, and answer the question "Is it ever okay to kill someone?"

(Reading: Key Ideas and Details: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1; Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.1; Speaking and Listening: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.4)

FORGIVE OR FORGET?

Maddie writes, "And then there is Isolde von Linden, at school in Switzerland, who doesn't know yet that her father has just shot himself." Even though Isolde's father was responsible for Julie's pain, Maddie seems to have only sympathy for his daughter.

Divide students into pairs, with one student taking the role of Maddie and the other of Isolde, as they meet years later after the war has ended. What would they say to each other? Is Maddie still sympathetic or has she become vengeful? Is Isolde ignorant of her father's war crimes or contrite? Ask student pairs to prepare a dialogue between Maddie and Isolde to present to the class or ask each to compose a letter to the other. As a group, encourage students to discuss how they felt about this process and share their reactions.

(Writing: Text Type and Purposes: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.3; Writing: Production and Distribution of Writing: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.4; Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.3)

IN MEMORIAM

"Julie is buried in her great-aunt's rose garden, wrapped in her grandmother's first communion veil, and covered in a mound of damask roses." Julie's great-aunt honored Julie in death with the best materials available to her. Ask students to design a memorial that commemorates an event, victims, or heroes from the book. They may select a specific character to honor or a group. Students should assume the memorial is being created in the present day.

Memorial plans should include both written and illustrated items, including a sketch of the design, a physical description with size specifications, colors, and building materials, a proposed location (from the book) for the memorial along with an explanation for selecting this location, symbolic design details, cited information from the book that helped inspire the design, a cost estimate for construction, and a potential funding source. Students should have the opportunity to display and present their memorials, explaining their process, design, and symbolism.

It may be useful for students to look at other memorials and discuss before they begin:

- *National Mall and Memorial Parks* (**www.nps.gov/nacc**)
- *National World War II Memorial* (**www.wwiimemorial.com**)
- *The Battle of Britain London Monument* (**www.bbm.org.uk/thesite.htm**)
- *Berlin Memorials to the Second World War and the Holocaust*
  (**www.theirpast-yourfuture.org.uk/upload/pdf/Berlin_Memorials_to_the_SWW_and_the_Holocaust_-_IT.pdf**)

(Reading: Key Ideas and Details: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1; Writing: Text Type and Purposes: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.2; Writing: Production and Distribution of Writing: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.4, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.5; Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.7, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.8; Speaking and Listening: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.4)

GET YOUR ETERPEN READY — WRITING ACTIVITIES

- While Julie could pull a story out of thin air, the work of creating cover stories and identities for SOE agents was not usually done by the agent. Developing an entirely new identity for someone to successfully adopt is an elaborate process and requires great attention to detail. Ask students to create their own new identity, then compile a dossier that provides elaborate background details and a thorough description of their disguise. Their file should include a synopsis but could also include manufactured documents, letters, or even photographs. *(Writing: Text Type and Purposes: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.2; Writing: Production and Distribution of Writing: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.4)*

- Most people are always consciously or unconsciously observing nonverbal behaviors and making conclusions based on those observations—like the observation of Julie looking the wrong way when crossing the street in France. The inference drawn in that situation—that she must be a British agent—was correct. Ask students what little things they notice about a friend or family member and have them write about the inferences they've drawn about that person based on that behavior. Suggest that they think about whether or not any of these behaviors might lead that person to harm. *(Writing: Text Type and Purposes: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.1; Writing: Production and Distribution of Writing: CCSS. ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.4)*

- Maddie is delighted with the photograph of her burnt plane and the eleven "wireless sets" and ecstatically notes, "If they have got Julie and they show her that picture, it will be a gift. She will make up an operator and a destination for every single one of those phony radios, and the frequencies and code sets to go with it. She will lead them blind." Ask students to develop their own story from a historical photograph. You or they may choose one of the images offered by the National Archives (UK) **(www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/imagelibrary/second -world-war.htm)** or from the more than twelve thousand photographs in the World War II Database **(www.ww2db.com/photo.php)**. *(Writing: Text Type and Purposes: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.3; Writing: Production and Distribution of Writing: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.4)*

- Julie reluctantly confesses, "RDF is Range and Direction Finding. Same acronym as Radio Direction Finding, to confuse the enemy, but not exactly the same thing. As you know. Well. They call it *Radar* now, an American word, an acronym of *RA*dio *D*etection *A*nd *R*anging, which I do not think is easier to remember." No matter what you call it, this invention paved the way for technological advances that have changed the world. Many also consider it to be the "weapon" that won World War II, and its development for wartime use was a serious secret. Now that the secret about radar is out, ask your students what they know about radar and how it affects their daily lives. This discussion is preparation for students to research and develop an article about radar. Ask students to play the role of science reporter and write about the development of radar, the science behind it, a historical application, and at least one current technological advance developed because of it. Some good online resources to launch research are Radar 101 from the Franklin Institute **(www.fi.edu/weather/radar/science2.html)** and the National WWII Museum's Science and Technology of World War II—Radar **(www.ww2sci-tech.org/exhibit/dark.html)**. *(Writing: Text Type and Purposes: CCSS. ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.2; Writing: Production and Distribution of Writing: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.4, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.5; Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.7, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.8)*

FURTHER READING

The multiple perspectives provided in *Code Name Verity* offer an excellent opportunity to focus student attention on the importance of understanding the diversity of people and events in 1938–1943. Issues of sex, class, race, culture, and religion are all discussed, often from several viewpoints. Further historical inquiry for this time period should be encouraged, pushing students to consider and discover other stories and events told from differing viewpoints. Students should examine the choices open to the author (see the afterword and bibliography) and consider ways she might have approached various subjects differently.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ELIZABETH WEIN was born in New York City, grew up abroad, and currently lives in Scotland with her husband and two children. She is an avid flyer of small planes and is the editor of the Scottish Aero Club's newsletter. She also holds a PhD in Folklore from the University of Pennsylvania. **(www.elizabethwein.com)**

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A CONVERSATION WITH ELIZABETH WEIN

1 What led you to write historical fiction?

Before I wrote historical fiction I wrote fantasy. My early, unpublished novels were all fantasy, and I have a few short stories that are fantasy as well. I switched to historical fiction because I wanted to create worlds that *might really have existed.* I couldn't entirely *believe* in my fantasy worlds, but I believe in my real-world settings. Egotistically, I am in love with the idea that the stories I create could really have happened. There is even a tiny part of my brain that believes in my own characters.

2 In the afterword for *Code Name Verity* you write, "You couldn't make these people up." Tell us more about that wonderful and frustrating paradox that history presents to a writer.

I think this is the paradox at the root of the saying "Life imitates art." It's not true just of history, but of any fictional narrative. Katherine Paterson wrote *Bridge to Terabithia* after her son's friend was struck by lightning; her editor felt that lightning as a cause of death was too unbelievable to put in a work of fiction, and Paterson had to come up with something less sensational to use in the book. I often find that the true story is more amazing than its fictional counterpart.

As a writer you have to balance things. I don't like including real people in my books (unless they've been safely dead for fifteen hundred years). Apart from world leaders, the only real person who gets mentioned in *Code Name Verity* is Pauline Gower, who headed the women's section of the Air Transport Auxiliary. But I have carefully kept her offstage.

My high school French teacher was a member of the Resistance as a teen (she was Jewish, in hiding as a Roman Catholic). She gave us a nail-biting account of her life during the war, and I have not used any of it in *Code Name Verity*. That is her story, not mine. Of course her story informs my understanding of what went on in Nazi-occupied France, but I don't feel I have the right to use any of those details.

I use my research as a springboard. I love it when I stumble across facts that confirm things I've guessed at or invented. But I do try to keep my fiction fictional.

3   Your book introduces readers to aspects of history that they may not be familiar with. Do you think there is a risk that readers will have trouble distinguishing fact from fiction? What do you feel is the author's responsibility in being historically accurate while still telling a riveting story?

One of my early reviewers commented that the women's roles described in *Code Name Verity* seemed at first so impossible for the time period that she wondered if the book was meant to be set in an alternate universe. Other reviewers have commented that they had no idea, before reading this book, that women had acted as pilots during World War II. I wrote about the women of the Air Transport Auxiliary and the Special Operations Executive because I was fascinated by them, and I wanted to share that fascination. But I didn't have the foresight to guess that by doing so I would become an advocate for them.

In writing *Code Name Verity* I set out simply to tell a story. It wasn't meant to be a history lesson—I didn't want to teach or preach about the ATA or the SOE or the Moon Squadron. Of course I wanted to make people aware that they existed, but mainly I wanted to craft a story around them. And because I wanted to create a plausible adventure, I tried hard to get the facts right.

It's possible that the more accurate a picture I paint, the greater the risk that readers will mistake my "fiction" for "history" (or alternate history, if they find the unfamiliar facts unbelievable). It's my responsibility as a researcher to present the historical background as faithfully as I can. But it's the reader's responsibility to acknowledge the author as a storyteller. If *Code Name Verity* encourages readers to learn more about the ATA or the SOE, that's fabulous.

4   If you could go back in time, where would you go and why would you select that
    particular time period?

    If I could somehow do it without completely changing the North American
    environment, betraying the native population, and decimating the endemic
    species of the American West, I confess I'd like to follow in Laura Ingalls
    Wilder's footsteps. I long to witness the virgin hardwood forests of North
    America, trees ten feet across; herds of antelope and buffalo; the railways being
    built; the miracle of the telegraph. I envy Laura Ingalls Wilder the privilege of the
    sweeping changes that she witnessed, and her attempt to record it with honesty.

5   Considering the uninterested or negative response that teachers often get when
    they ask or suggest students do research, what advice do you have for getting
    students engaged in digging deeper and building positive attitudes about
    research? Did you enjoy the research aspects of creating this book?

    Involvement and *relevance* help to make the past pertinent. Yes, I enjoyed the research
    I did for *Code Name Verity*, but that was because I was already deeply interested in
    the subjects I'd chosen and could relate to them. The best advice I can give is for
    educators to help their students choose research projects they can really connect
    with—topics they are passionate about or which have direct significance for them.

    We need to press home that history isn't something that happened a long time
    ago in a vacuum—time is a continuum, and we are the direct descendants of
    the people who lived, farmed, invented, fought, loved, enslaved, and freed each
    other at any given time in the past. The thrifty spirit of wartime rationing has
    parallels in our current concern for the environment; the threat of terrorism and
    the shadow of racial hatred are ongoing battles in today's world.

    The Second World War shaped the world as we know it today: It led to the
    development of the aircraft industry, the advent of radar and the computer,
    rockets, nylons, ballpoint pens, contact lenses, instantaneous electronic
    communication, and simultaneous interpretation. Hands-on projects (making a
    crystal radio, for example, or trying out wartime recipes) help to bring the past
    to life; a more serious campaign might be to promote zero tolerance on racial or
    religious hatred within the school. Or young people can take an active role in
    wider issues: campaigning for Amnesty International, or raising funds for aid to
    war-torn areas in developing countries.

I feel strongly that the younger generation need to see themselves as the guardians of truth, heirs to a legacy—a sense that "This was not our battle, but we are going to learn from it, broadcast our knowledge and do better things for our world." Young people learning history today need to think of themselves as active participants in a continuous story, as today's keepers of the lessons of the past (both good and bad), and as tomorrow's innovators.

6 One of the things that make your writing so rich is the relationships you create. You write, "It's like being in love, discovering your best friend." Do you draw on your own experiences and from your own friendships?

Absolutely. I confess that when I began writing this book, I planned Julie and Maddie's friendship entirely for reasons of plot—it's *necessary* for them to be such close friends in order for the climactic moment to work. But as I wrote, describing their relationship, it turned into a celebration of friendship for me. I pulled together key memories from my own friendships (many of them) to create this book—not just actual incidents, like the bicycle adventure in the rain, but many of the throwaway details, like both girls confessing that they have sometimes been envious of each other.

Although many of my friendships are remembered in *Code Name Verity*, when I wrote that line about "being in love" I had a specific friendship in mind, one that developed very quickly and under a certain amount of stress. We weren't able to see each other very often, though we were both involved in the same complicated project. We weren't fighting a war, but we did feel embattled—and *united*. It was very easy to map our real emotions and reactions onto my fictional characters. "We are the champions" (from the Queen song) was our battle cry, and I consciously echoed this in Maddie and Julie's repeated "We make a sensational team!"

I ought to add that it's not just the friendships I base on my own experience. The slimy Resistance agent who can't keep his hands off Maddie is based on every single man who's ever harassed me. I gave him all their lines. (It is true: You couldn't make these people up.)

In the past ten years or so I've become a lot more adept at cutting and pasting from my own experience to make my fiction believable and, I hope, accessible.

7   Julie is very well-read. Have you read all the books alluded to in *Code Name Verity*? What books and authors have influenced your own writing?

Julie's literary background is not exactly the same literary background that influences me as a writer. Her cultural literacy is carefully constructed on my part to match her character, and she hasn't got exactly the same taste as me. I *have* read every specific book she mentions, although some of it I didn't read until I was a lot older than her (*The Silence of the Sea*, for example). Orwell is the exception. I've only read the Paris part of *Down and Out in Paris and London*. The Orwell we read in high school, *Animal Farm* and *1984*, hadn't been written at the time *Code Name Verity* is set.

My early writing influences were Alan Garner (the British author of *Elidor* and *The Owl Service*) and J.R.R. Tolkien—you can definitely see the magic touch of classic British high fantasy in my previous novels, which are all set in the sixth century AD. Another British author who's influenced me is Rosemary Sutcliff, whose historic coming-of-age adventures I hugely admire.

I think my literary influences have changed over the years. Ian McEwan, Anne Morrow Lindbergh, Dorothy Sayers, and contemporary children's author Hilary McKay have all left their mark on *Code Name Verity*. My reading tastes have changed as I've grown older—and so has my writing.

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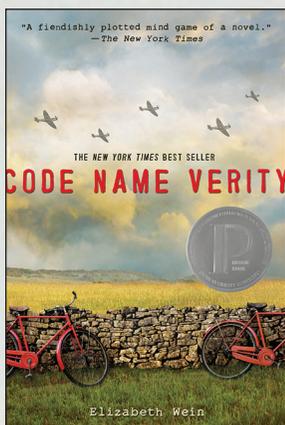## ROSE UNDER FIRE
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