

READING GROUP GUIDE

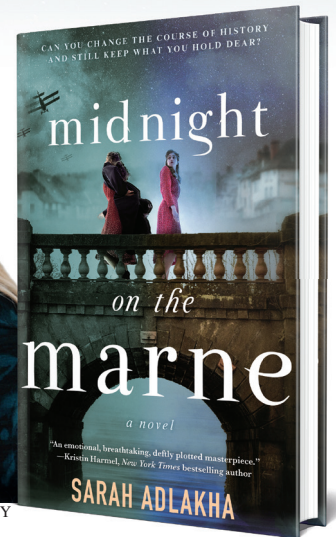
midnight *on the* marne

Set during the heroism and heartbreak of World War I and in an occupied France in an alternative timeline, Sarah Adlakha's Midnight on the Marne explores the responsibilities love lays on us and the rippling impact of our choices.

Sarah Adlakha is a native of Chicago who now lives along the Mississippi Gulf Coast with her husband, three daughters, two horses, and one dog. She started writing fiction shortly after retiring from her psychiatry practice. Her debut novel, *She Wouldn't Change a Thing*, was a CNN most anticipated book of 2021. *Midnight on the Marne* is her second novel.



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1. The book started off with Juliette reading a diary to Marcelle that contained long-lost details from Marcelle's past that may or may not have been an account of true events. What would you do if you came across a diary long into the future of forgotten secrets from your past? Would you share your story or keep it to yourself? What sort of things would you expect to find written in the pages? Can you envision what parts may surprise you?
2. Marcelle described her and her twin sister, Rosalie, as being "two different versions of the same person." Do you see yourself being more aligned with Marcelle's personality or Rosalie's? If you were staring in the face of a terrifying war, would you be the achiever like Marcelle or the pleaser like Rosalie? What are some strengths and weaknesses of each personality type in this situation?
3. The book shifted perspectives between a third-person-telling of Marcelle and George. How did this affect the storytelling? What did this framework add to the story overall? Why was it so important that the reader had insight on how events transpired from both sides?

4. A British agent named Charles made Marcelle an offer to be a spy in order to coax information—like enemy positions and battle plans—from beleaguered and battle-weary soldiers. Was her choice to accept his offer a smart one? Did this change the integrity of her character or did it align with her headstrong personality? If you were in her shoes, what choice would you have made and why?

5. After being captured by the Germans, Marcelle's true identity was discovered despite the fact that she refused to offer up any information. She was then faced with the worst dilemma: to speak the truth or have Rosalie's blood on her hands. Did she choose wisely? What effect did this decision have on her character? How did this impact the course of the timeline? What does this say about the human psyche and a person's ability to withstand torture?

6. Remaining brave in moments that warrant sheer terror is a theme throughout the book. How would you define bravery? Is it born from desperation? Duty? Love? A basic need for survival? In what ways did each of the main characters become braver over the course of the story?

7. "But being forgettable is an invaluable tool. Remember that." (pg. 131). Memory was brought up and questioned multiple times throughout the book—especially in 1991. Details became hazy and memory was an unreliable source. But is there a certain value in forgetting and being forgettable? What purpose did it serve here? How are memories (or the lack thereof) intertwined with the alternative timeline that took place?

8. When Marcelle was pregnant with Gabriel, she refused to allow herself to feel a connection with him. She was even unwilling to take proper care of her body. She went through with having him because Lina, a prophet of sorts, told her she must. What was her main aversion to having this baby? What were the roots of her fears? Why was Lina so intent on her carrying him to term?

9. Captain Max Neumann gifted Gabriel a book of fairy tales for his birthday and requested Marcelle read one aloud. She chose to read "Le Petit Chaperon Rouge" — "Little Red Riding Hood." Do you think this is a metaphor? In what way? How does a story like this relate to the events that occurred in the apartment that same day?

10. *Midnight on the Marne* shines a light upon the reality of what would happen if you altered the timeline by changing the course of your future. What do you think defines someone's destiny? What does it mean to change the predestined path you're on? How do the characters' choices impact their fate throughout the book? If you were presented with the opportunity to rewrite your own history, would you choose to do it? Why or why not?

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