

## BOOK CLUB KIT

"An unforgettable saga. The history at the heart of this story should never be forgotten."

Michelle Shocklee,  
author of *Under the Tulip Tree*

# About Melanie Dobson

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Melanie Dobson is the award-winning author of more than twenty historical romance, suspense, and time-slip novels, including *The Curator's Daughter*, *Memories of Glass*, *Hidden Among the Stars*, *Catching the Wind*, *Chateau of Secrets*, and *Shadows of Ladenbrooke Manor*. Four of her novels have won Carol Awards; *Catching the Wind* and *Memories of Glass* were nominated for Christy Awards in the historical fiction category; *Catching the Wind* won an Audie Award in the inspirational fiction category; and *The Black Cloister* won the *Foreword* magazine Religious Fiction Book of the Year.

Visit [Melanie's website](#) to stay up-to-date on news from the author & sign up for her newsletter to receive updates directly to your inbox.



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# A Note to Book Groups

By Melanie Dobson

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Much has happened in our world since I wrote *The Curator's Daughter*. While I wove together the threads of this time-slip novel in 2019, the underlying themes about the cycle of hatred and quest for significance are perhaps even more relevant today.

Like all my novels, the research and writing of this story was a personal journey. My fifteen-year-old daughter, Kiki, accompanied me from our home in Oregon to Washington, DC, where I read through the Nuremberg Trial transcripts at the National Archives, walked a prayer labyrinth in Georgetown, and had the tremendous honor of interviewing both a research scholar and a Holocaust survivor at the Holocaust Memorial Museum. After a train and ferry ride north, Kiki and I spent several days exploring the Victorian cottages and beaches on Martha's Vineyard. And I learned that lobster rolls are my new favorite food!

A month later, I headed across the Atlantic to explore the medieval lanes in Nuremberg, the Nazi Party Rally Grounds, a (formerly) secret art bunker, Courtroom 600, several German toy museums, and the forested hills, sandstone quarry, and old zoo below where my fictitious heroine Hanna Tillich once lived. It was an honor for me to learn about the Jewish Memorbücher and the rich cultural history in one of the most powerful cities of the Roman Empire.



Writing *The Curator's Daughter* was also a figurative journey as I sought to understand how so many people were fooled by Hitler's rhetoric and the horrific web of National Socialism. Over a breakfast of fresh bread and quince jam, a German friend explained how she and many others in her generation are still trying to understand why their parents didn't fight against the Nazi regime.

As I researched both modern-day stories of anti-Semitism and ones from centuries past, I wrestled through these questions: What if it were a crime today to speak out against evil? What if my words were judged by a dictator who could destroy my family and career? And what if I were a German archaeologist with the best of intentions to preserve the legacy and dignity of my country before everything that I valued was turned on its head?

These questions drove me to write *The Curator's Daughter* almost two years ago, and I hope you will ask similar questions now as you circle the labyrinth of Hanna, Ember, and Lilly's story.

Thank you for joining me on this journey!

~Melanie



View of Old Town from the  
Imperial Castle of Nuremberg



## A Step into the Setting

Melanie Dobson shared some photos of a visit she made to Germany. Take a peek at the photos on this page and the next to gain a deeper understanding of the places and setting Melanie wove into *The Curator's Daughter*.



Forest and sandstone  
above Nuremberg



Hidden art bunker tunnel  
under medieval Nuremberg

Nuremberg Bridge



# Scenes from Nuremberg



Medieval Nuremberg



Dollhouse in Nuremberg toy museum



# Q&A WITH MELANIE DOBSON

Read this Q&A with your book group and discuss how hearing the author talk about the novel deepened your understanding of key themes and characters in the story.

**Q. Tell us about some of the core themes of *The Curator's Daughter*. How do you hope these themes will resonate with and challenge your readers?**

The importance of learning from history, the importance of remembering, is one of the main themes in *The Curator's Daughter*. There are Jewish memory books from the thirteenth century, namestones, memorial stones from the book of Joshua, and German stumbling stones—all physical items set in place so future generations won't forget.

Another major theme in this story is forgiveness. Both my past and present heroines struggle to forgive husbands who abused them, and they visit an old labyrinth above Nuremberg to pray and then lay down their burdens, their wounds, at the place where a cross once stood.

I hope readers will be inspired to break free of any bitterness and find ways to remember the miracles in their story to pass down as a legacy to the next generation.

**Q. Who did you write this book for?**

All my novels are written in hopes of challenging and inspiring both men and women who read faith-centered fiction. I write for readers of all ages, and it brings me great joy when I hear from different generations in a family who are reading one of my time-slip novels together. In fact, the woman who initially inspired *The Curator's Daughter* had read one of my books (*Chateau of Secrets*) with her daughter-in-law and granddaughter, and this prompted her to share her story with her family.

I also wrote *The Curator's Daughter* for myself. My German ancestors had to make some very difficult choices before and during the war, and I wanted to search for answers as to why so many Germans seemed to rally behind the cruelty and oppression of Hitler's Third Reich.

**Q. How did you get the idea for the connection between your two main characters, Hanna and Ember?**

The connection between Hanna and Ember slowly developed as I realized that Ember would be a Holocaust researcher, inspired by the stories of her former teacher on Martha's Vineyard, and the victim of a modern-day cult. As she delves deeper into her teacher's past, she discovers Hanna's story, and this story ultimately changes her life. As a time-slip writer, it's rewarding for me to weave the stories of past and present characters together as I discover the connections between them. I won't give away all the threads, of course, but the similarities in what Hanna faced in the 1940s and what Ember continues to face today surprised me.



**Q. What was one of the most surprising things you discovered in your research for this novel?**

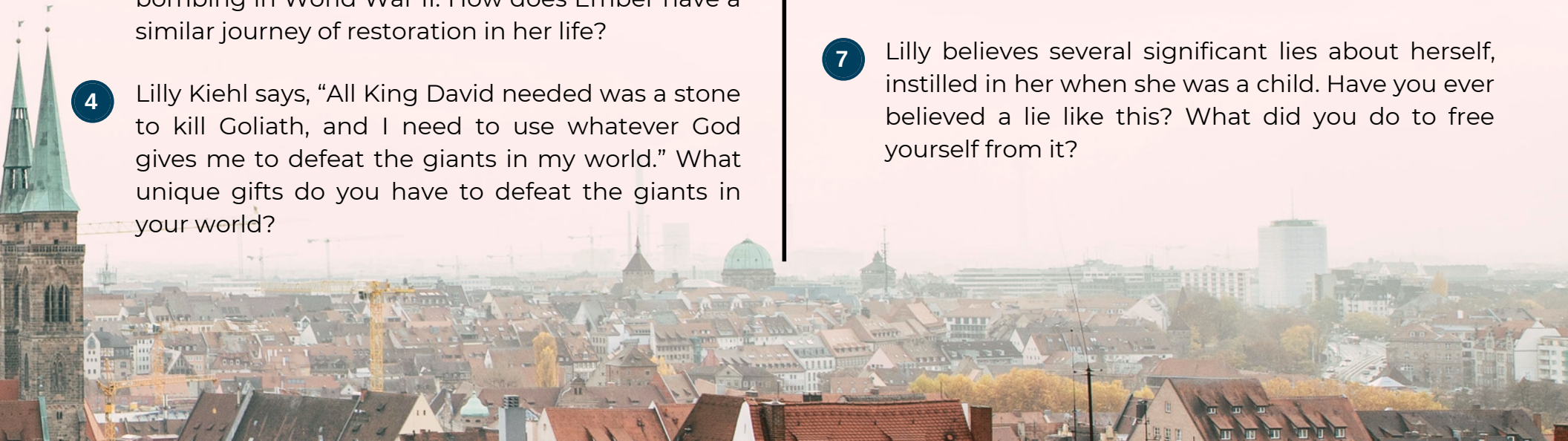
When I began writing this novel, I knew the Nazis stole artwork and other artifacts from Eastern Europe, but I had no idea they also kidnapped Jewish children to be raised as “racially pure” Germans. The Nazis had begun losing many of their countrymen in the war so they took it upon themselves to measure these children for what they considered defects and “aryanize” those who they thought would help build a new German culture and loyal army. Some accounts say that more than 200,000 children were kidnapped from countries like Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. Many of these kids were too young to remember their biological families, and some didn't find out for decades that they weren't really German.



# Discussion Questions

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- 1 At the beginning of *The Curator's Daughter*, Hanna admires anyone who could protect an important secret like the location of the Holy Grail. How does this desire to protect secrets alter the course of her life?
- 2 What is the significance of Hanna and Ember collecting the stories of Jewish people before and during the Holocaust? How can remembering a past story change the future for an individual or family?
- 3 The medieval buildings in Nuremberg were destroyed and then completely restored after the bombing in World War II. How does Ember have a similar journey of restoration in her life?
- 4 Lilly Kiehl says, "All King David needed was a stone to kill Goliath, and I need to use whatever God gives me to defeat the giants in my world." What unique gifts do you have to defeat the giants in your world?
- 5 Ember has a choice in this story between reconciliation and retribution. Have you ever had to forgive someone who meant to harm you? Did this process end in restoration as it did for Ember and Dakota or more like Ember's confrontation with Titus Kiehl?
- 6 During the Nuremberg Trials, the atrocity of war crimes comes to light, and Hanna is overwhelmed with horror. In the labyrinth, she repents of her sin and the sin of her people, but she still wonders if Jesus will forgive them. What does the Bible say about God's mercy? What do we need to do to be forgiven?
- 7 Lilly believes several significant lies about herself, instilled in her when she was a child. Have you ever believed a lie like this? What did you do to free yourself from it?



8 In this story, Ember keeps trying to forget what happened in her past, but she eventually has to remember in order to heal. What is the best way to balance one's memories without letting them influence contemporary reactions and relationships?

9 The Nazis were adamant about controlling both entertainment and language as they tried to manipulate their culture. Often what sounded good—purity and heritage and living space—was really propaganda for evil. How do the definitions of a language influence the morality of its people? And how does a society fight against intellectual manipulation?

10 In the end, Hanna exchanges her fear for hope and her shame for forgiveness. What choices do the other characters make in regard to their own fears and shame? How do past choices impact the characters today?

## My Book Group Questions

Jot down some questions you want to ask your group:

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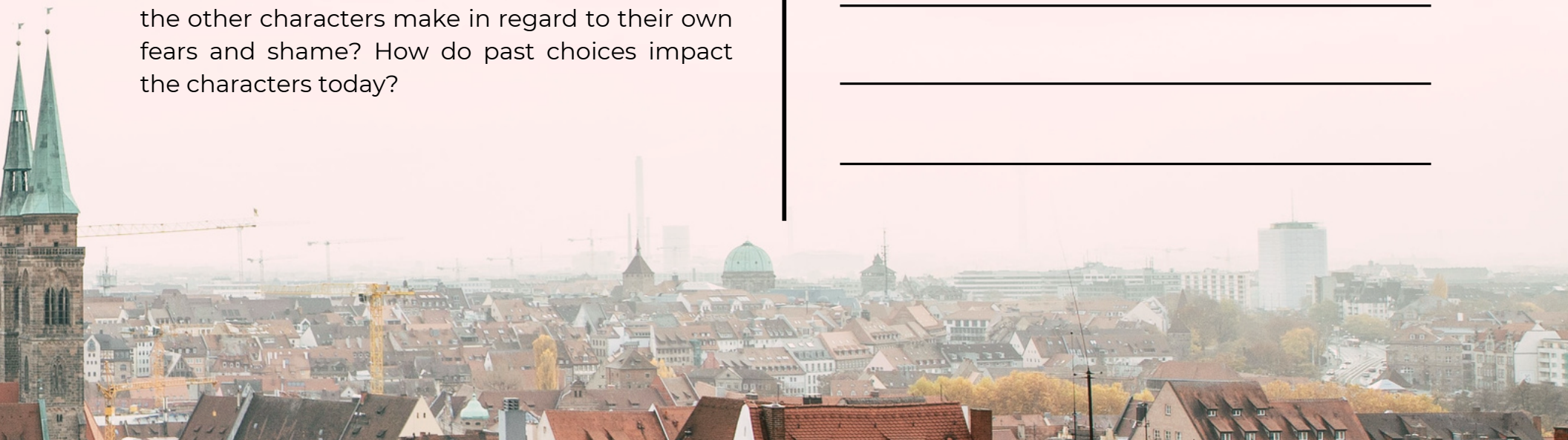
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# Thanks for choosing



# for your book club!

Keep an eye out for a new time-slip novel by Melanie Dobson coming in 2022 from Tyndale House Publishers.

**crazy4  
fiction**  
.com



Discover more great fiction from award-winning novelist Melanie Dobson

Available now in bookstores and online