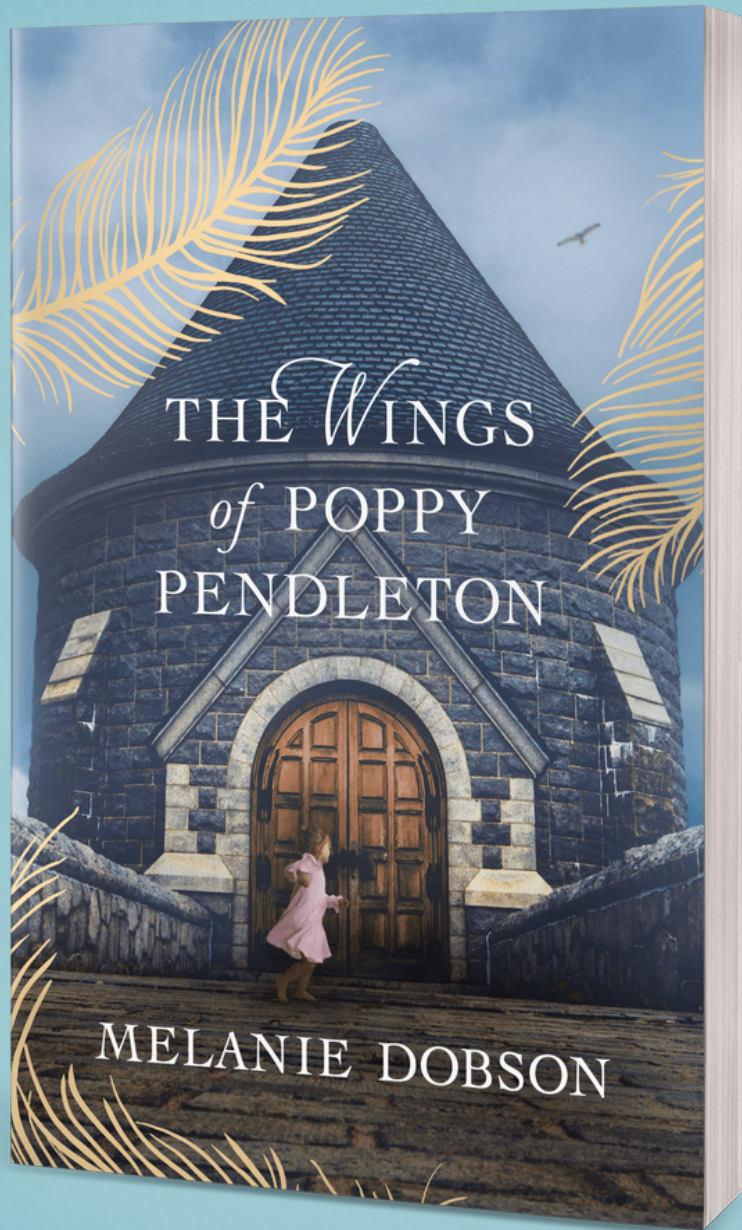


Book Club Kit



“Melanie Dobson writes with a heart bent toward healing, and again she delivers an intriguing story of the bonds of family, the mystery of time, and the power of love.”

**PATTI CALLAHAN HENRY,
New York Times bestselling author**

About Melanie Dobson



Melanie Dobson is the award-winning author of almost thirty historical, time-slip, and romantic suspense novels. Five of her novels have won Carol Awards; *Catching the Wind* and *Memories of Glass* were nominated for a Christy Award in the historical fiction category; and *Catching the Wind* won an Audie Award in the inspirational fiction category. *The Black Cloister*, her novel about a religious cult, won the *Foreword* magazine Religious Fiction Book of the Year.

Melanie is the previous corporate publicity manager at Focus on the Family, owner of the publicity firm Dobson Media Group, and an adjunct writing professor. When she isn't working on her next novel, Melanie enjoys teaching a variety of workshops.

Melanie and her husband, Jon, have two daughters. After moving numerous times with work, the Dobson family has settled near Portland, Oregon, and they love to hike and camp in the mountains of the Pacific Northwest and along the Pacific Coast. Melanie also enjoys exploring ghost towns and abandoned homes, helping care for kids in her community, and creating stories with her girls.

Visit Melanie online at melaniedobson.com for more information about her books or to sign up for her newsletter.



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A Note from Melanie Dobson

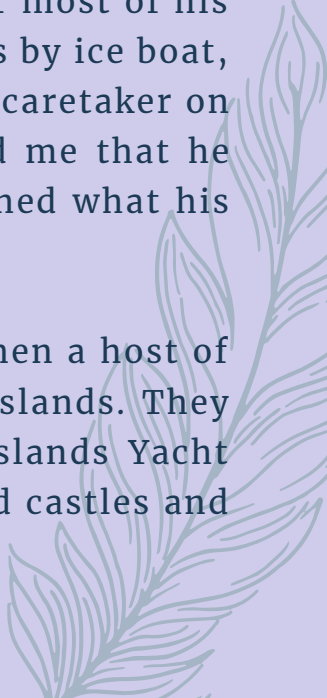
When I began writing *The Wings of Poppy Pendleton*, I traveled to New York to explore the mysterious Thousand Islands and tour its Gilded Age castles. Since one of my main characters—a much-loved man named Cade—was an island caretaker for about seventy years, I wanted to learn everything possible from locals who grew up on the shores of the St. Lawrence.

The Little Book Store in Clayton was my first stop, and the owner introduced me to a memoir called *River bRat* by Kenny and Melody Brabant. The authors, I soon discovered, lived right up the street, and they graciously invited me to their house.

I laughed when Kenny introduced himself as a “character.” Then he told me a few jokes before he launched into his favorite childhood memories. For the first time in my twenty-five years of novel writing, I felt like I was meeting one of my characters.

While Kenny is not Cade, he has lived in the Thousand Islands for most of his life. A self-proclaimed river brat, he grew up exploring the islands by ice boat, motorboat, and skiff. For the last forty-plus years, he has been a caretaker on the nearby Grindstone Island, and I laughed again when he told me that he begins each day “with a bowl of nuts and bolts.” Then he explained what his day—what Cade’s day—would look like caring for the gilded set.

Poppy Pendleton’s story begins at the turn of the 19th century when a host of new-money families from New York City flooded the Thousand Islands. They arrived early each summer to wine and dine at the Thousand Islands Yacht Club. They hosted grand parties in their newly built mansions and castles and cruised the river in the finest of boats.





A Note from Melanie Dobson

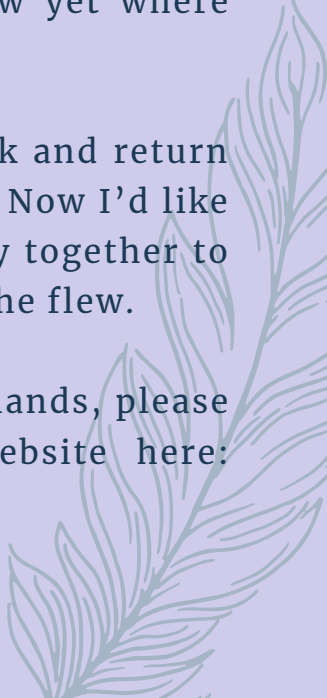
The winters, though, were reserved for hearty locals who boated across the ice to visit those who lived year-round on the islands. Even today, locals like Kenny and Melody continue to cruise across the St. Lawrence when it freezes over.

The ice had thawed by the time I arrived in May, and I enjoyed touring the island gardens and castles and the river's many waterways by paddle steamer. As I explored, I envisioned my historical protagonist, Amelia Pendleton, overseeing an imaginary gala at Boldt Castle on Heart Island. In my mind's eye, I saw my contemporary heroine Chloe at the decrepit cottage on Deer Island (my fictional Koster Isle) and then young Emma's rowboat in the reeds of an uninhabited shore.

And little Poppy—I saw her everywhere. Wandering the cliffs. Riding the stormy waves. Skating across the icy channel. Watching the birds. I knew she'd disappeared from her family's castle in 1907, but I didn't know yet where she'd gone.

It was pure joy for me to meet locals like the Brabant's that week and return home to Oregon to write the stories of all my fictional characters. Now I'd like to introduce you to Cade, Amelia, Chloe, and Emma. We'll journey together to find out where Poppy's fragile but resilient wings took her when she flew.

P.S. If you'd like to see pictures from my time in the Thousand Islands, please visit *The Wings of Poppy Pendleton* research page on my website here: melaniedobson.com/research/the-wings-of-poppy-pendleton/



Discussion Questions

To start the book group conversation about *The Wings of Poppy Pendleton*, read through these questions with your book club.

1. The main characters in this novel try to find happiness, or what some describe as joy, through various means. What is the difference between happiness and joy? How can we enjoy the simple pleasures of life without being consumed?
2. The similarities in Birdie's, Chloe's, and Emma's stories endear them to each other, creating a strong bond between three generations. How does history repeat itself in this story? And how do these characters turn a cycle of harm into healing for the next generation?
3. When Emma finds a sparrow with a broken wing, she says, "Even a fragile wing can fly again." Do you have an example from your life where a broken or seemingly hopeless situation was restored?
4. What do Amelia's birds and the aviary represent in her life? And how does Birdie's imagination give her the freedom to fly?
5. Chloe equates diving into her memories to a scuba diver searching a shipwreck, but shipwrecks like the *Empress of Ireland* are very dangerous to explore, sometimes stealing the lives of multiple divers. When is it healthy to dive more deeply into the past and when can exhuming a wreck be dangerous to our well-being? How can we balance the two?

Continued on next page



6. While a shipwreck was ultimately Birdie’s salvation, it destroyed other people’s lives. As she ponders God’s presence, Birdie also asks why God didn’t stop the war or the shipwreck or the man. How would you answer this tough question?

7. Scottish writer George MacDonald said in his book *Phantastes*, “Past tears are present strength.” How have past trials and hardships strengthened you today?

8. Several characters in the story are intent on blessing their friends and family, while others want to hurt those who love them. Then other characters in this book are conflicted about spreading joy or chaos in their world. If you were counseling Amelia or Chloe, what words of advice would you give each of them? Anything you’d like to say to another character?

9. Amelia, on the advice of the doctor and her father, believed it was in Poppy’s best interest to be taken away from Ellie. How do you balance Amelia as heroic on one hand and selfish on the other? What would you do if you were asked to harbor someone else’s child?

10. Logan has seen plenty of evil in his life, but he has deliberately chosen to right the wrongs in his world instead of contributing to destruction. In chapter 29, he thinks about all those who are busy planting the seeds of God’s Kingdom, resulting in a harvest of good. Have you ever watched a seed of healing or peace grow into something extraordinary? And do you have a “joy giver” in your life?

Jot down some questions you had about the story here:

Q&A with Melanie Dobson




1. What inspired this story?

The setting for *The Wings of Poppy Pendleton* was inspired by novels written by Susan Mathis and Ellen Potter. Even though I've spent a lot of time in New York, I had never before heard of the castles built along the St. Lawrence River. When I read their books, I fell in love with the mystery, beauty, and Gilded Age history from the Thousand Islands.

The main plotline in Poppy's story was inspired by a recently discovered photograph of my grandpa and great-uncle as children. In this picture, my great-grandmother is holding a baby girl, and while my family is close, no one had ever told me about a great-aunt. I discovered that my great-grandparents adopted a girl in 1923, but sadly, they both died when she was young and none of my relatives knew what happened to her. As I began to unravel Marjory's complicated journey, I decided to write a novel about another girl who went missing in the same era. A mystery that I could ultimately resolve through fiction.

2. What do you enjoy about time-slip narratives?

I have an innate desire to bring order to chaos and confusion, especially when it comes to finding out the truth about a past secret that impacts the well-being of future generations. In time-slip fiction, this unique challenge of delving into a difficult situation from the past leads to the pursuit of modern characters to find answers. My stories usually start with several different threads, and my desire is to weave them together in a way that brings hope and resolution for readers.



Q&A with Melanie Dobson



3. Describe the audience that you envisioned while writing this book. Who do you think will enjoy this book?

It's really inspiring to hear of multiple generations—like a granddaughter, daughter, and mother—reading my novels together. While I have readers of different ages, both men and women, most of them seem to enjoy three specific things from the reading experience: They like multilayered, page-turning, entertaining novels. They enjoy learning about faith and history. And they want to grow or gain a new perspective through the books they read. I was intentional about trying to include each of these elements in Poppy's story.

4. What messages or themes do you focus on in this story?

As someone who discovers my plot as I write, it's often not until near the end of my first draft that I realize what my book is really about. I certainly grappled with consolidating my main theme as I wrote *The Wings of Poppy Pendleton*, but the story, I finally realized, is about the balance of appreciating and enjoying God's creation and all that is good in our world without corrupting it. Other themes include restoration, the search for true joy, and not allowing the past to define our future.

5. The setting plays an important part in your story. What does the setting symbolize?

The St. Lawrence River is wild and mysterious, serene on a calm day and terrifying in a storm. This river is named after a Roman martyr who cared for the poor about two hundred years after Christ, and the immense boundary of water between Canada and the United States funnels the world's largest reservoir of fresh water to the Atlantic. Underneath the often turbulent surface of the St. Lawrence is a graveyard of ships from centuries past, and the history, beauty, and unpredictable nature of this river symbolizes the tumultuous journey of my characters who need to find joy and peace in the midst of their personal storms. Characters who choose to search for unity in spite of division and ultimately take the shipwrecked pieces of their lives and create something meaningful from the debris.

Q&A with Melanie Dobson



6. How does your book address the challenges in our culture?

Our world is filled with faux joy in the forms of overconsumption, consumerism, and endless streams of entertainment, but instead of satisfaction, these indulgences can lead to anxious minds and empty hearts. As a result, we often war within ourselves in the quest to obtain community, stability, and peace. This novel explores both sides of happiness—what is a temporary and unhealthy fix versus life-sustaining joy. While I sure don't have all the answers, I hope Poppy's story encourages readers to consider the source of true joy.

7. What do your readers love the most about your work?

I have the best reader friends! So encouraging in their notes and sharing of their own stories. Every novel I write is a glimpse of my own journey, and I hope readers can relate to the struggles of my characters even as they cling to beauty and restoration in the midst of really hard circumstances. The realities of broken relationships and then the possibilities of reconciliation are two things that readers seem to appreciate in my work. While they know things aren't going to work out perfectly for every character, there will be redemption in the end.

8. What do you find to be the most challenging part of the writing process? What advice would you offer young writers?

I love researching a new story and dreaming up the characters and plot, but the writing portion of the writing process is, oddly enough, the most difficult part for me. Even though it's hard, I love the challenge, and writing fiction is tremendously life-giving for me as it brings some order to all the messy ideas in my mind.

Anne Lamott once said, "Perfectionism is the voice of the oppressor, the enemy of the people. It will keep you cramped and insane your whole life, and it is the main obstacle between you and a [bad] first draft." My advice for new writers is to learn from the experts, analyze the structure of your genre, seek wise advice about how to improve your skills, and then write that first draft. It won't be perfect but pour your story onto paper and then come back later to polish your words.

Q&A with Melanie Dobson




9. Which books and authors have shaped you most as a writer?

Emily Climbs by Lucy Maud Montgomery and Julie by Catherine Marshall encouraged me to pursue my dream of fiction writing in my early years, and as I grew older, I read books by authors like Jan Karon, Robin Lee Hatcher, Davis Bunn, Francine Rivers, Randy Alcorn, Linda Hall, and David Long that haunted me in the best sense of the word. I wanted to write like these men and women who communicated important spiritual truths through a compelling story.

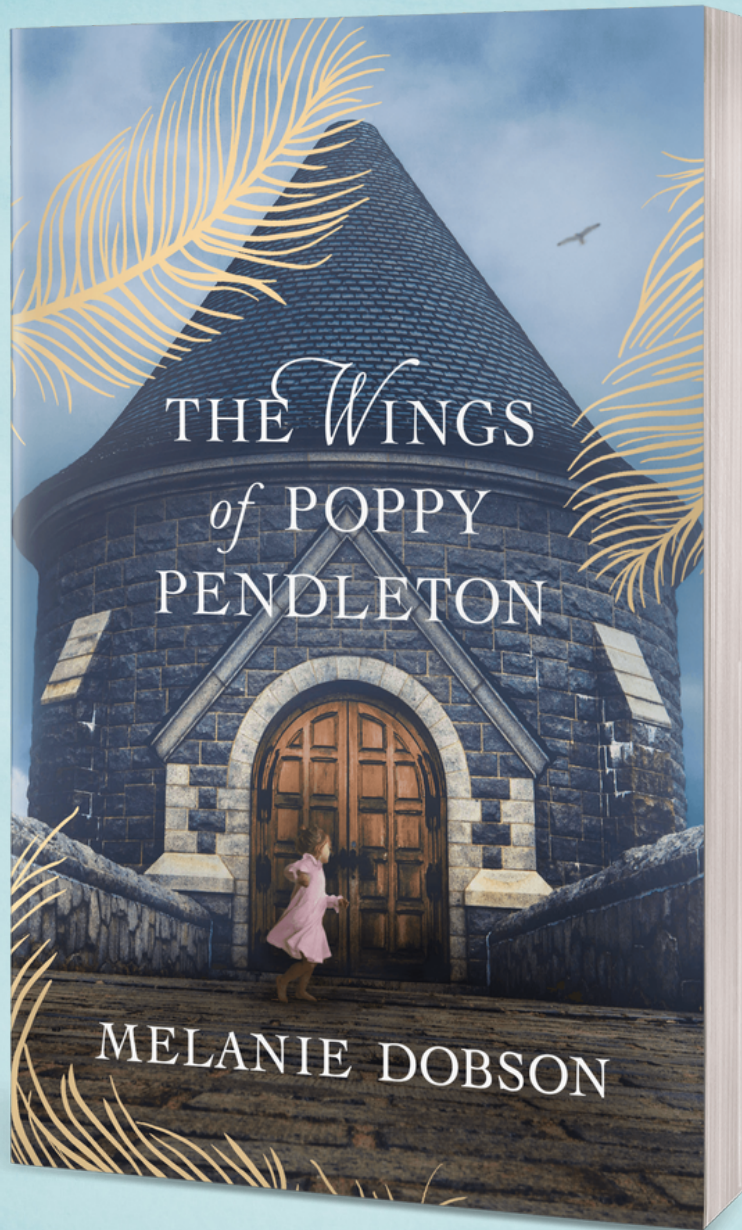
About ten years into my career as a novelist, I read Sarah's Key and was mesmerized by how Tatiana de Rosnay wove together dual timelines to create a complete and captivating plot. I spent months studying the time-slip structure and have enjoyed the challenge of weaving together the threads of multiple timelines ever since.

10. Do you have any new writing projects planned?

I'm constantly curating new ideas, but right now, I am actively working on two novels. The first is a fictionalized version of Hagar's story in Genesis. I have learned an enormous amount about Old Testament culture in the past six months, and many of my preconceived notions have been turned on their head. I'm super excited to share this story of redemption with readers. The second book is my seventh time-slip novel with Tyndale House. This one will involve an old mansion in New York and an old book and . . . While my mind is deep in that story, I'm still working out the details. More to come soon!



Thanks for choosing



for your book club!

**Keep an eye out for
the next novel by
Melanie Dobson**

**Coming in 2024 from
Tyndale House Publishers**

