



BOOK CLUB KIT



Meet Melanie Dobson

Melanie Dobson is the award-winning author of more than twenty historical romance, suspense, and time-slip 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 a former adjunct professor at George Fox University. When she isn't writing, 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.

Find Melanie on social media:

 [MelanieDobsonFiction](https://www.facebook.com/MelanieDobsonFiction)

 [melbdobson](https://twitter.com/melbdobson)

 [melbdobson](https://www.instagram.com/melbdobson)

P.S. Visit Melanie's website at [melaniemelbdobson.com](https://www.melaniemelbdobson.com) to sign up to get news delivered directly to your inbox!



A Letter to Book Clubs

From Melanie Dobson

I am just thrilled that you've decided to read *The Winter Rose*! The idea for this story sparked a few years ago while I was researching *The Curator's Daughter*. American Quaker women, I discovered in my stack of books, served in France during World War II. I was fascinated by their adventures and the risks they took to care for thousands of hurting kids.

When it was time to write my next time-slip novel, I wanted to show the courage of these heroines through the journey of one woman who was filled with beauty and grace, resilience and strength—like the winter roses in the harsh Pyrénées.

The Winter Rose is a collection of my mental wanderings, research, and complete awe in the redemptive power of God. This story is a mosaic of sorts about colorful emotions, bags of wrongs, weeping willows, faithful siblings, persistent prayer, the healing of hearts, and hardy vineyards grafted from French vines. It's given me great joy to paste all these pieces on a story canvas to share.

I hope you are inspired by Grace's journey as you climb the seemingly impossible mountains in your own path, clinging to hope along the way.

With joy,

Melanie Dobson

Scenes that Inspired the Story

To help you understand the time and place of *The Winter Rose* even more, take a peek below at these photos from Melanie Dobson. These places inspired settings you've read about in the novel.



Meetinghouse like the
one Grace attended



Meeting hut similar to
Louis's in the novel

P.S. Wondering what the château Grace and the children sheltered in would have looked like? Take a peek at Château de Gudanes here: chateaugudanes.com/home



The lake at Camp Tillikum that inspired Tonquin Lake



This vineyard setting is similar to what the Tonquins would have seen in *The Winter Rose*

Europe in 1943

In *The Winter Rose*, Grace bravely navigates the treacherous Pyrénées mountains with the children she's rescuing. To get a better sense of the geography and landscape they traversed in the novel, take a look at the map on the next page which features the geography of Europe during World War II.





EUROPE

1943



With Melanie Dobson

Before your book club discussion, read this Q&A with Melanie Dobson to learn more about why she wrote the novel and the research she conducted for the story. Then discuss what new insights you have about the story based on what the author shared.



What inspired the storyline and characters in *The Winter Rose*? Are any based on real historical figures?

*I used to teach at George Fox University, a school in Oregon founded by the Religious Society of Friends, and had the privilege of learning about Quaker history there. The characters and storyline for this novel are a culmination of research and personal experience, and while *The Winter Rose* isn't based on the life of one historical figure, Grace—my Quaker heroine in Nazi-occupied France—was inspired by women like Mary Elmes, Alice Resch, and Marjorie McClelland who cared for children during World War II through the American Friends Service Committee.*

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

Usually I travel to my main settings to research my novels, but with the pandemic, I wasn't able to go to France or even to the American Friends archives in Philadelphia. People were incredibly generous with their time and resources to get me the information I needed for this story. The AFSC archivist answered my many questions, digging through files from home and forwarding them to me. The president of the American Synesthesia Association, Carol Steen, spent a significant amount of time on Zoom to help me build my synesthete character

of Marguerite. During our time together, I was surprised to learn that synesthesia has been recognized in Europe for more than a hundred years. Carol also educated me on the artistic talents of those who see words, numbers, or emotions in vibrant color.

Where did you get the idea for Grace Tonquin's connection to Oregon and the Quaker community? Was her story inspired by anything from your own life?

This is my sixth novel set during World War II, and as I research each book, I often learn new things that I'm able to

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use in my current story. I originally learned about the Quakers' work as I wrote The Curator's Daughter, and before I started my next book, I spoke with several Friends about the possibilities. While I wasn't able to travel overseas, I spent several days writing at a local Quaker retreat center with a lake that inspired Tonquin Lake in The Winter Rose. I pour a bit of myself into every novel I write and pieces of this story were inspired by my belief in God's power to redeem families.

Many of your books are in the historical fiction genre. How do you come up with fresh ideas? What is it about the WWII era that you find most fascinating?

Often my novels stem from dilemmas that I'm wrestling through in my personal life and sometimes they are inspired by a friend's story or something that I've read or a place I've

visited, wondering what happened there. I'm a dreamer by nature so my mind often wanders between fact and fiction. Even something seemingly simple, like the weeping willow in this novel, can spark an entire plotline for me.

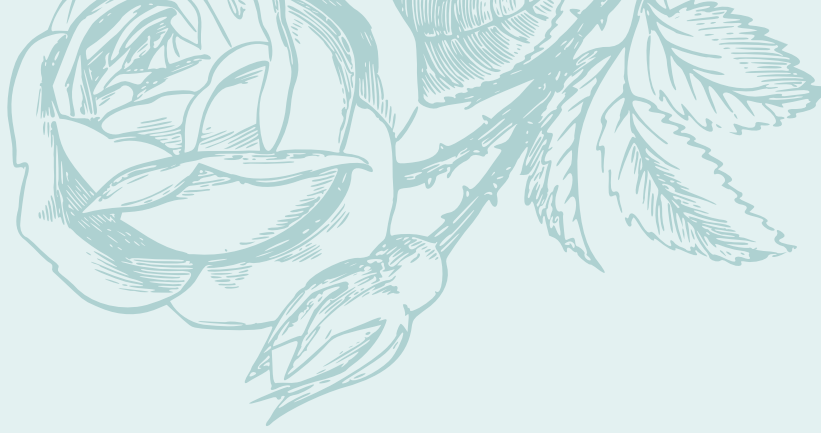
The World War II era is fascinating because a small group of people are still alive who remember what happened, some of whom are just now sharing their story. We don't always know the motivations of historical figures, but much of what occurred during the Holocaust was undeniably good or evil. As a Christ follower, I believe there is a spiritual enemy in our world, and World War II clearly illustrates this battle between right and wrong. It is my honor, as a novelist, to share the stories of men and women who risked their lives in the midst of evil to love others.

Tell us about some of the core themes of *The Winter Rose*. How do you hope these themes will resonate with and challenge your readers?

Beauty in brokenness was one of the most important themes in The Winter Rose. I was hoping to demonstrate the French concept of brocante—salvaging items that someone else trashed, then restoring and re-purposing them in their brokenness for something new. I wanted to show how God can heal the most painful of wounds, restore complicated relationships, and through the incredible power of forgiveness and prayer, use the nicks and gashes and ultimately redemption in our stories for good.

"The Nazis had tried to steal away every ounce of hope with their threats, the nectar of their life, but hope swelled again in every flower that bloomed here, every new baby born, every child mended in the hospital ward."

The Winter Rose



Discussion Questions

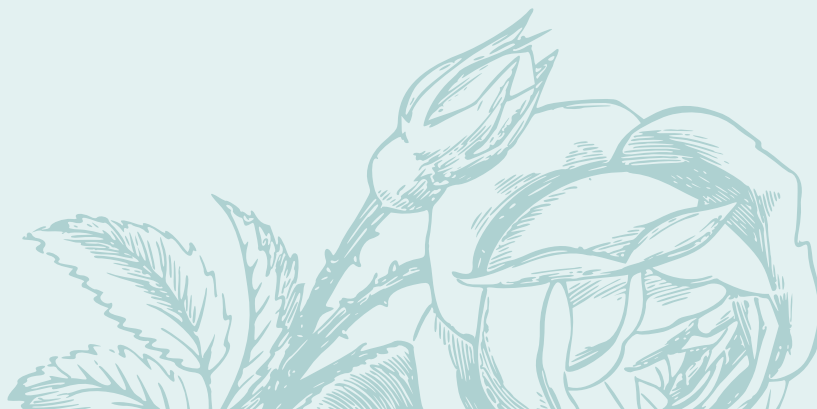
Read and answer these questions aloud with your book club to get the conversation started about *The Winter Rose*.

- 1.) A winter rose blooms in the Pyrénées when the children near Spain and then again at the end of the story when Charlie comes home. What is the significance of this flower?
2. When Grace and the children finally reach safety, she reflects on the fact that all they have been through will shape the children for the rest of their lives. In what ways do we see these experiences shaping Charlie, Louis, and Marguerite? What childhood experiences—good or bad—have shaped your life?
3. In spite of Grace’s desire to rescue children, she isn’t able to save Louis or Charlie from the wounds of their past. Is there anything else she could have done as a foster parent and friend to love them more? What, if anything, would you have done?
4. Marguerite’s gift of synesthesia gives her the ability to see emotion in color. How has God uniquely gifted you and how do you use this gift for His glory?

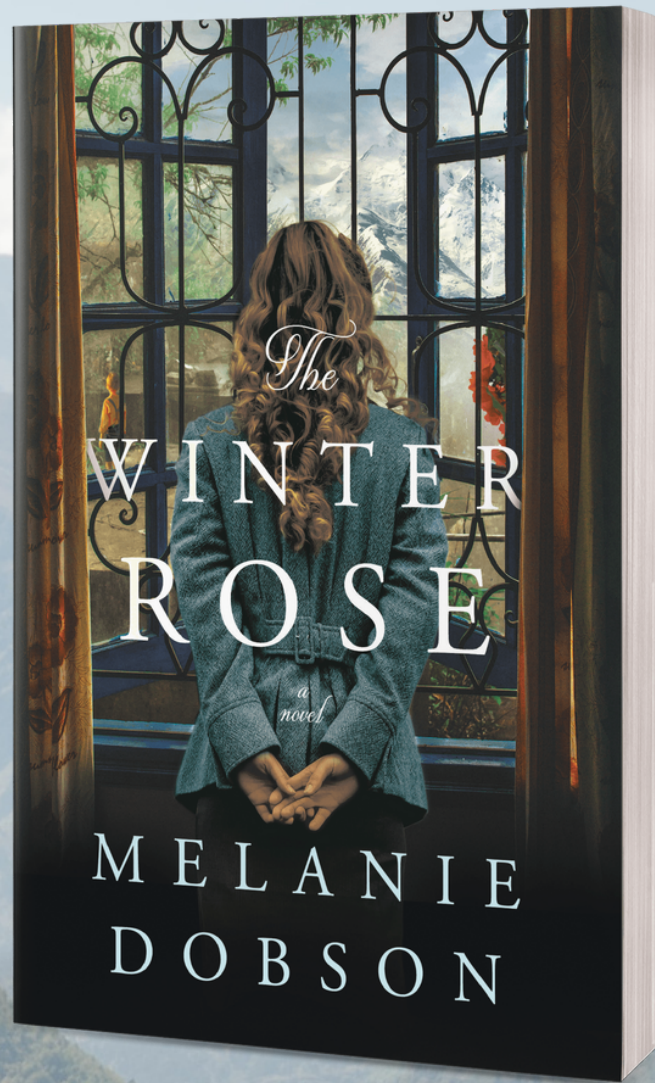
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Discussion questions continued

- 5.) When Charlie is young, Grace praises him for his courage and his desire to fight injustice. Discuss Charlie's path from his difficult teen years to the maturity of adulthood. Why do you think he takes this detour before settling into a life of love and service? If you are familiar with King David's story in the Bible, how would you compare and contrast his journey with Charlie's?
- 6.) For much of her life, Grace clings to David's words in Psalm 27. Do you have a specific Bible passage or other writing that helps direct your path?
- 7.) What is the significance of Addie throwing the rocks and later her wedding band into the water? Have you ever had to release a burden that you weren't meant to bear?
- 8.) As a Quaker, Grace actively seeks God's peace in simplicity and quiet spaces. "Shekinah for her soul," she calls it. Do you have a quiet place where you can still your heart and listen?
- 9.) Grace never realizes in her lifetime the results of her prayers for Charlie. How do you balance heartache and hope in your life?
- 10.) From Caleb's furniture refinishing to Roland's renovations on the abandoned chateau, restoration is a key theme in *The Winter Rose*. While Charlie receives forgiveness in his younger years for what he did to the Tonquin family, he is given the opportunity much later in life for personal restoration. Do you have a story of redemption or restoration? Or is there a relationship that you still hope to restore?

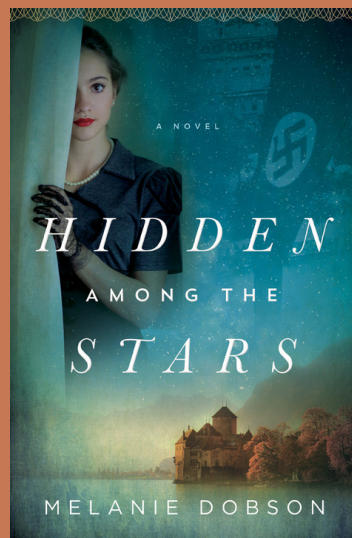


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