

THE LANE WINSLOW MYSTERIES BY IONA WHISHAW

General Reading Questions

1. The character of Lane Winslow was inspired by Iona's mother who spent some time as wartime spy. Are there any characters in this series who remind you of someone in your own life? Why?
2. Lane is bound by the Wartime Secrets Act and must keep her activities as a spy a secret for decades after the war, even from her husband. Famously, women were treated as mere wives and helpmeets by their husbands, who never learned how brilliant their wives had been in perceived "male spheres." How difficult would it have been to be the woman in these marriages? Do you think you could keep a secret like that in your own life?
3. We may be biased, but we think that this series would make a pretty great TV show. Who would you cast as Lane, Darling, and Ames? What about Kenny and Eleanor?
4. Certain scenes and even major plot lines in this series have been inspired by questions asked or comments made by readers and fans—for instance, we learn about the teenage years of the Hughes sisters in *An Old, Cold Grave* because a fan asked Iona about them at a reading, and Terrell rides a motorcycle because of a fan letter that Iona received suggesting he could provide expertise if she was so inclined to include one. If you could suggest a plot point for a new book in the series, what would it be?
5. Lane gets herself into trouble just as often as she gets herself out of it. Are there scenes when you find yourself yelling at Lane "don't do that!" or "don't go in there!" or "wait for backup, Lane!" What personal strengths does Lane call on when she is in these situations?
6. This series illuminates quite a lot of Canadian postwar history. Iona writes about Russian interference in *Death in a Darkening Mist* and *A Deceptive Devotion*, home children in *An Old, Cold Grave*, the National Unity Party in *A Sorrowful Sanctuary*, and the forced migration of the Sinixt people in *Framed in Fire*. What is the most surprising aspect of Canadian history that you've learned from Lane Winslow?
7. This series has been praised for addressing social issues—racism, xenophobia, domestic violence, sexual abuse, feminism—that are still current today. What storyline were you most surprised to encounter in King's Cove / Nelson in the late 1940s?

A Deceptive Devotion (#6)

1. There is an old expression, "the more things change, the more they stay the same." The interests and activities of the Soviet Union play a big role in this book. At the time their espionage and subversion efforts were focussed on gaining knowledge of the atom bomb from the West. Do you see similarities in the continuing role espionage and subterfuge play in east/west politics today?
2. Lane and Darling face enormous hurdles to making a life together, both emotional and circumstantial. One of them must give up where they live, both of them are very private people who do not open up easily. Darling has his work, but Lane is an intelligent, highly experienced person who must content herself somehow with no longer having the role she had during the war. How can these factors make them strong, and how might they undermine the relationship over time? Who has to give up the most?
3. So far in the series Ames has ended relationships with Violet and April. Now he's invited the inimitable Tina Van Eyck to Lane and Darling's wedding. How do you foresee their relationship proceeding? Tina is another strong personality—what do you think it would take for this relationship to work?

