

Everyone Brave is Forgiven – Reading Group Questions

- Letters are very important in the novel. Do you still write them? If not, why not? Do you think letters are a better method of communication than the modern digital world?
- ‘I was brought up to believe that everyone brave is forgiven, but in wartime courage is cheap and clemency out of season’. Which character do you think shows most courage in the course of the novel?
- Discuss what happens to Duggan. Why do you think the author decided to make this happen at this point in the book?
- ‘Let us imagine, she thought, that this war will surprise us all.’ How did the novel’s portrayal of war – both for soldiers and for those back home – differ from other fictional treatments of war, in both novels and films? What did you learn about the world war – did the novel offer any fresh perspectives?
- The author shows us a number of human relationships tested to extremes. Think about Mary and Hilda, then Tom and Alistair, and discuss the novel’s portrayal of friendship.
- We associate the allies’ wartime efforts with heroism, but the novel reveals many prejudices and intolerances. Did the racist attitudes in the novel shock you? How far along have we come today? Discuss society and behaviour.
- ‘Your imagination is not on the syllabus’. Is Mary a good teacher?
- ‘How good it would be to fall in love – how perfectly, anciently new.’ Think about young love and romance during wartime – do you imagine it was easier to fall in love, or more difficult?
- Discuss the role of humour in a novel about war.