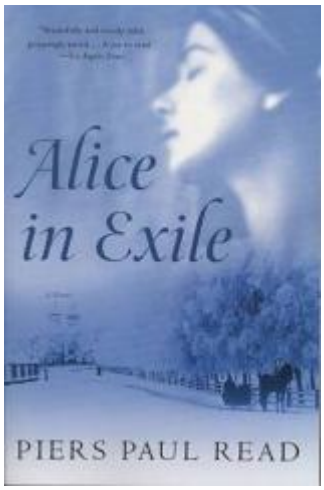
bookreporter

Alice in Exile: A Novel

by Piers Paul Read



About the Book

Alice in Exile is Piers Paul Read's triumphant return to the fiction for which he is widely praised: romantic, dramatic, and rich with detail. It features Alice Fry--an independent woman in a world ruled by men--and the two men who love her. It is 1913 when Alice meets Edward Cobb, the eligible son of a baronet. When Alice's father, a radical publisher, gets involved in a scandal, Edward breaks off their engagement, unaware that Alice is expecting his child. Desperate, she travels to Russia to serve as a governess for charming Baron Rettenberg, as the Russian Revolution and World War I rage on.

Discussion Guide

1. In what ways is Alice ahead of her time? Why do you think a straight-laced person such as Edward would be attracted to her?

2. Consider the scandal that envelops Alice's father. Are there echoes to the scandals that erupt in today's world? How so?

3. Is there a modern sensibility to this historical novel? If so, what is its effect on the story?

4. Discuss the conflicts and taboos in this story: class, status, politics, war, Alice's pregnancy, thwarted love, etc. Would you say times have or have not changed enough in a century's time?

5. Is this book a romance novel? How so? How do the romantic themes heighten the dramatic story line?

6. How do the backdrops of World War I and the Russian Revolution serve as characters in this story? In what ways do they interfere with Alice's relationships, her life?

7. Do you believe Baron Rettenberg loved Alice? Why or why not?

8. Does this story end realistically? Would you have chosen to end it differently?

Author Bio

Piers Paul Read, FRSL (born 7 March 1941) is an award-winning English novelist, historian and biographer. He was first noted for a book of reportage Alive: The Story of the Andes Survivors, later adapted as a feature-

film and a documentary. This was followed by some well-acclaimed novels that criticised English middle-class ethics from the less-usual viewpoint of a right-wing practising Catholic, with sin and redemption as recurring themes. Among his most popular works are The Professor's Daughter, A Married Man, and A Season in the West. Read is also a dramatist and TV scriptwriter.

Critical Praise

"*Alice in Exile* is profoundly conventional, absolutely old-fashioned, and I confess to having missed a highly advertised fiesta in a Mexican mountain town just so I could stay in the hotel and find out what happened."

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