Sarah's Key

by Tatiana de Rosnay

About the Book

Paris, July 1942: Sarah, a 10-year-old girl, is brutally arrested with her family by the French police in the Vel' d'Hiv' roundup, but not before she locks her younger brother in a cupboard in the family's apartment, thinking that she will be back within a few hours.

Paris, May 2002: On Vel' d'Hiv's 60th anniversary, journalist Julia Jarmond is asked to write an article about this black day in France's past. Through her contemporary investigation, she stumbles onto a trail of long-hidden family secrets that connect her to Sarah. Julia finds herself compelled to retrace the girl's ordeal, from that terrible term in the Vel d'Hiv', to the camps, and beyond. As she probes into Sarah's past, she begins to question her own place in France, and to reevaluate her marriage and her life.

Tatiana de Rosnay offers us a brilliantly subtle, compelling portrait of France under occupation and reveals the taboos and silence that surround this painful episode.

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Discussion Guide

1. What did you know about France's role in World War II --- and the Vél d'Hiv round-up in particular --- before reading **Sarah's Key**? How did this book teach you about, or change your impression of, this important chapter in French history?

2. Sarah's Key is composed of two interweaving story lines: Sarah's, in the past, and Julia's quest in the present day. Discuss the structure and prose-style of each narrative. Did you enjoy the alternating stories and time-frames? What are the strengths or drawbacks of this format?

3. Per above: Which "voice" did you prefer: Sarah's or Julia's? Why? Is one more or less authentic than the other? If you could meet either of the two characters, which one would you choose?

4. How does the apartment on la rue de Saintonge unite the past and present action --- and all the characters --- in **Sarah's Key**? In what ways is the apartment a character all its own in?

5. What are the major themes of **Sarah's Key**?

6. de Rosnay's novel is built around several "key" secrets which Julia will unearth. Discuss the element of

mystery in these pages. What types of narrative devices did the author use to keep the keep the reader guessing?

7. Were you surprised by what you learned about Sarah's history? Take a moment to discuss your individual expectations in reading **Sarah's Key**. You may wish to ask the group for a show of hands. Who was satisfied by the end of the book? Who still wants to know --- or read --- more?

8. How do you imagine what happens after the end of the novel? What do you think Julia's life will be like now that she knows the truth about Sarah? What truths do you think she'll learn about her self?

9. Among modern Jews, there is a familiar mantra about the Holocaust; they are taught, from a very young age, that they must "remember and never forget" (as the inscription on the Rafle du Vél d'Hiv) Discuss the events of **Sarah's Key** in this context. Who are the characters doing the remembering? Who are the ones who choose to forget?

10. What does it take for a novelist to bring a "real" historical event to life? To what extent do you think de Rosnay took artistic liberties with this work?

11. Why do modern readers enjoy novels about the past? How and when can a powerful piece of fiction be a history lesson in itself ?

12. We are taught, as young readers, that every story has a "moral". Is there a moral to **Sarah's Key**? What can we learn about our world --- and our selves --- from Sarah's story?

Author Bio

Tatiana de Rosnay is the author of 10 novels, including the *New York Times* bestselling novel SARAH'S KEY, an international bestselling sensation with over 2 million copies sold in 35 countries worldwide. Together with Dan Brown, Stephenie Meyer and Stieg Larsson, she was named one of the top 10 fiction writers in Europe in 2009. Tatiana lives with her husband and two children in Paris. Visit her online at www.tatianaderosnay.com.

Critical Praise

A remarkable novel written with eloquence and empathy.

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