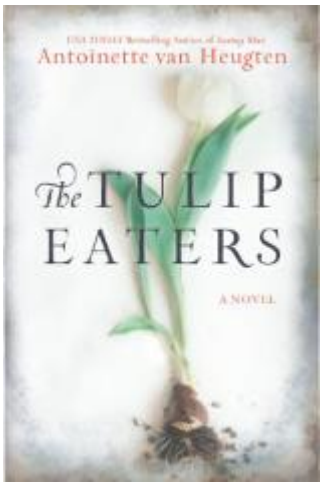
The Tulip Eaters

by Antoinette van Heugten



About the Book

In a riveting exploration of the power the past wields over the present, critically acclaimed author Antoinette van Heugten writes the story of a woman whose child's life hangs in the balance, forcing her to confront the roots of her family's troubled history in the dark days of World War II.

It's the stuff of nightmares: Nora de Jong returns home from work one ordinary day to find her mother has been murdered. Her infant daughter is missing. And the only clue is the body of an unknown man on the living-room floor, clutching a Luger in his cold, dead hand.

Frantic to find Rose, Nora puts aside her grief and frustration to start her own search. But the contents of a locked metal box she finds in her parents' attic leave her with as many questions as answers --- and suggest the killer was not a stranger. Saving her daughter means delving deeper into her family's darkest history, leading Nora half a world away to Amsterdam, where her own unsettled past and memories of painful heartbreak rush back to haunt her.

As Nora feverishly pieces together the truth from an old family diary, she's drawn back to a city under Nazi occupation, where her mother's alliances may have long ago sealed her own --- and Rose's --- fate.

Discussion Guide

1. What kind of woman is Nora? How are she and Anneke similar? Different?

2. What roles do culture and religion play in the novel?

3. Integration by immigrants who came to the United States after World War II was often problematic. What do you think it was like for Anneke and Hans to try to be Americans? Was their tendency to isolate typical? How difficult do you think it was for Nora to feel like a “real” American with parents from a foreign country?

4. How important is the setting in the novel? Does it add depth to the historical information presented throughout the story?

5. Did the novel give you a different viewpoint about how some Dutch citizens neither fought in the resistance nor joined the NSB? What about those who did join the Nazi movement?

6. What attributes do you admire about Nora? Which did you not admire? Did the author effectively convey Nora’s pain, terror and grief about the situation in which she found herself—her mother murdered and her

baby kidnapped? What would you have done differently?

7. Did the novel hold your interest? What was your favorite part? Your least favorite part?

8. Isaac is not a classic antagonist in that he is not a villain, but an embittered man who lived through an inhumane experience that ruined his life. Still, he is a murderer. Did you develop sympathetic feelings for him as you read the novel? What about Amarisa?

9. Ariel is caught between his father's world and his own. Was he ever master of his own fate? What do you think of him as a character and did he change by the end of the novel?

10. Do you think Anneke should have told Nora about her past love with Abram? Should she have told Nora that Abram was her father or would this have been unfair to Hans, who raised her? How much are children entitled to know of their parents' past and have your views on this subject changed as you have aged?

11. How do you feel about the decision Nora made at the end of the novel not to prosecute Ariel? Would you have done the same?

Author Bio

Antoinette van Heugten is a former international trial lawyer who retired to pursue a full-time career as a novelist. She took inspiration for her *USA TODAY* bestselling debut novel, SAVING MAX, from her heartbreaking and joyous journey as the mother of two autistic children. She lives with her husband in the Texas Hill Country.

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