

ONE YEAR ONE NIGHT

S.L.ROMAN

Discussion Guide



1. Why do you think the author chose to include Annie's diary entries? What do we learn about Annie from the diary entries that we don't learn from the main text or narration of adult Annie?
2. What do you think it was like growing up in Annie's village during World War II, with air raid sirens, blackouts, rations, gas masks, and more?
3. On page 14, Annie's father reveals that he volunteered to go to war, saying, "This is my chance to do something ... for my country." How do you feel about his decision? How do you think his family feels?
4. What do you think it was like for the families that hosted children and for the children they hosted? What are some of the challenges they may have faced?
5. On p. 45, Annie says, "World War II was proving to be a great social leveller." What does she mean by that? How was the war experience similar for wealthy people like the Mandevilles and for poorer people? How was it different?
6. In the book, Annie talks frequently about propaganda—the newspapers and wireless limiting what they said about the war and only showing happy people at home. Why do you think they did that? Do you think people should have been told the full truth, or was it better for them not to know?
7. What do you think were some of the pros and cons of living in a small town like Millside during World War II, rather than in a big city like London?
8. How is Annie similar to a teenage girl living today? How is she different? How does her friendship with Peg compare with teenage friendships today?
9. Annie's family helps Ben by taking him in, but his presence in their home also helps them—especially Annie. How?
10. On page 118, Annie says of Peg, "In a way, she too was now a victim of the war." What does Annie mean by that? Do you agree?



Book Details

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About the Authors Laura Meloni and Sarah Onions

The writers have been friends for many years, but they wanted to write under a pseudonym, or single new name for their debut novel. They thought Meloni & Onions sounded more like a vegetable market, so they came up with the name **S.L. Roman** (in homage to Laura's native city, Rome). Both have been teachers at the high school level.

The idea for *One Year One Night* came from a true story, which surfaced at a former school in Surrey, England when Sarah taught there – a young boy was evacuated from Brighton in WWII and killed, by a bomb soon afterwards.

Research revealed that the boy had bad luck throughout his short life. His tragic story came to light 63 years later when a former evacuee petitioned for the boy's unmarked grave to be given a headstone (see image at right as it looks today).

Laura and Sarah worked up ideas to make a new story, keeping the central tragic boy but developing a range of new characters, often based on real people. The story details were supported by research into the wartime years of 1939 and 1940 in England and the UK.

The manuscript was completed in May 2020, 80 years after the final year in the life of an unlucky and forgotten boy. It is now published for the first time in North America.



Think About What Reviewers Say:

Unsurprisingly given the time period, there is plenty of casual sexism to be found within the events that Annie describes in her diary. As in her own life, she is treated very differently to her younger brother, with far more being expected of her in terms of both work and behavior. Moreover, the different attitudes toward men and women that she experiences are reflected in her own views of those around her. Sexism and sexual assault aren't the only disturbing social issues to feature in the book. The arrival of evacuee children shines a light on antisemitism, classism, and exploitation among some of the villagers. **Despite its grim moments, *One Year, One Night* is an uplifting story of self-discovery, young romance, and fortitude in the face of adversity.**

—Independent Book Review

