

STATELESS ELIZABETH WEIN



— Book Club Pick —

PRAISE

“An exhilarating trans-continental thrill ride.”

—Kate Quinn, author of *The Alice Network*

“A riveting, thought-provoking page-turner.”

—Sharon Cameron, author of *The Light in Hidden Places*

“This high-flying game of cat and mouse is simply spectacular.”

—Sherri L. Smith, author of *Flygirl*

“A soaring, immersive exploration of what it means to belong.”

—Stacey Lee, author of *The Downstairs Girl*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. When she flies over the trenches, Stella realizes that “[her] generation will have to fight the next war” if tensions in Europe become violent (p. 102). How did knowing that WWII was historically imminent affect your reading of the story and how you related to the characters?
2. Despite suspected sabotage, Lady Frith claims, “To stop now would be a betrayal of all young women who want to fly” (p. 192). In what ways is Stella forced to be a representative for her gender? How does being the only female contestant affect her? Do you think Lady Frith adequately supports her?
3. Throughout the book the press and reporters are depicted as a dangerous hindrance and also a useful tool. What do you think the role of the press should be in international politics and diplomacy? Do you think they have a primarily negative or positive effect in the story?
4. The book begins with the mystery of who killed one of the pilots, but that mystery is solved in the middle of the book. How does that plot decision affect the suspense and tension felt by the reader and characters for the rest of the story? How are secrets and knowledge used both as weapons and as gifts throughout the book?
5. After the other contestants pitch in to help Tony escape in Germany, Stella realizes that she “underestimated all of them” (p. 246). Why do you think she underestimated them? How does her view of them change over the course of the book?
6. Birds are used as points of comparison throughout the book, from fearless birds of prey (p. 158) to doves of peace (p. 355). What makes them such powerful symbols? How does Stella’s identification with them transform as the book goes on?
7. As Stella is flying Sebastian away from Germany, she decides, “Our choices *mattered*” (p. 328). How does personal agency conflict with national loyalty for Sebastian and the other characters in this book? How do they address that conflict, and do you agree with their choices?
8. The goal of the race is to promote peace in Europe and encourage international cooperation. In what ways was this premise flawed? Are there any ways in which it succeeded? Do you think sports can be an effective tool for peace?
9. At different moments of the book Stella and Tony explain both the joy and the agony of being alone. What various types of loneliness do they experience? Can you relate to them?
10. In the author’s note, Elizabeth Wein remarks that, “This *isn’t* a book about refugees; it’s a book about belonging... to no place and every place” (p. 381). What do you think she means? How do you see this reflected in the book?