

# Reading Notes

Book Club Notes for *The House of Secrets: Julia's Story* by J Mary Masters

## Book Summary

*The House of Secrets: Julia's Story* by J Mary Masters is the first book in the Belleville family trilogy. It is the unforgettable story of a family, the secrets they hide from one another and the betrayals of trust that finally each of them must face.

The story begins in Australia in 1942 against the backdrop of a world at war. The children of the Belleville family – Richard, William and Julia – have just come to adulthood. They are ruled by matriarch Elizabeth Belleville, whose husband Francis proves to be a disappointment.

For each of them, especially Julia, the events that unfold are life changing. For each of them, the revelations as they unfold are profound. And there is one long buried betrayal that will haunt all their lives.

## About the Author

J Mary Masters (Judith) grew up in a family of four children in the rural areas of central Queensland, Australia, where her father was, firstly, a farmer and later a grazier. She is a first time author with *The House of Secrets: Julia's Story*. The release of Books 2 and 3 of *The House of Secrets* trilogy are planned for 2016 and 2017 respectively. She is currently a magazine publisher with Sydney-based Yaffa Media. She lives in Brisbane with her husband Peter. Check out [www.jmarymasters.com](http://www.jmarymasters.com) for more information.

## Book Club Discussion

### Questions

1. *The House of Secrets: Julia's Story* begins with Richard's departure and Julia's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday party. Do you think Julia's story, as the title suggests, is the guiding narrative throughout the book? Why or why not?
2. Which of the characters do you feel most sympathetic toward when the book begins? Does your allegiance shift as the story unfolds?
3. Did you enjoy the Australian country settings? Do the settings and the era feel authentic?
4. The mother, Elizabeth Belleville, is a larger-than-life personality. As a reader, do you appreciate her strength of character or do you feel she is unreasonable in the treatment of her children, especially Julia?
5. Do you feel that William, the middle son, is sincere? Or do you see him as self-serving and concerned mainly with his own interests?
6. There are secrets that William and his mother decide to keep from Richard. Do you think they were right? What do you think Richard's reaction would be if he found out?

7. What detrimental effects do we see the war having on Richard? Do you think he can really settle down after the war finishes?
8. There is one major theme in the novel, which affected many young women of the era, the unplanned pregnancy. Do you feel the treatment of this issue is authentic? Did it resonate with you as a reader?
9. Did you feel the relationships between the family members were fully explored?
10. If you had the chance to decide the fate of the protagonists, what do you think life would have in store for them? Here is your chance to speculate on how the story evolves in books two and three.

## Book details

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By J Mary Masters

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