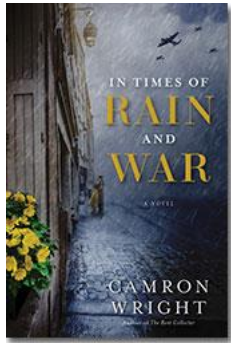


## In Times of Rain and War: Discussion Questions



See [AuthorCamronWright.com](http://AuthorCamronWright.com) for additional information relative to the story, including author comments on many of these discussion topics.

1. At the beginning of the war, in a letter to Audrey written by her father, he talks about preparing for the approaching calamity, saying, “When an unexpected storm rolls over the horizon, it’s prudent to board the windows, stockpile food, fill jars with water. But how does one know which storms intend destruction and which shall pass? Should one cower at every dark wisp of a cloud?” How would you answer his question? While it’s prudent to prepare for difficult times in our lives, can we over prepare? How do we find the balance between spending time preparing vs. spending time living?
2. Along these same lines, Germany discovered early that the psychological damage and disruption caused by an unexploded bomb was often greater than the ultimate damage caused by a physical explosion. How might this understanding help us as we approach problems? Is our worry over a situation sometimes worse than the consequences of the problem themselves? How can we defuse unnecessary worry in our lives?
3. As a child, Audrey placed letters in her box because her father had promised that when he was away, he would “feel the words in his heart.” How might Audrey’s box be a metaphor? Do you believe that Audrey’s box truly worked when her father was alive? How about after he had died?
4. In the early days of bomb disposal in England, it was believed that a soldier’s life expectancy in that capacity was about ten weeks. Could you work in such a dangerous job? How might such a precarious job change your daily attitudes and interactions toward others?
5. We learn that Lady Reading—a real person, whose history in the book is factual—had a bout of spinal trouble as a child that confined her to bed for months, an experience that she later called *lucky*. Why might she consider it lucky? What do we learn from her attitude about how she faced life’s problems? Is her outlook naïve or should it be admired and followed?
6. When discussing the first German bombing of London—one believed by many to be accidental—Dr. Gough explains to the Colonel how it may have changed the entire outcome of the war. He notes that after England’s reprisal bombing on Berlin, Hitler shifted his resources from military targets to the civilian bombing of London, a move that offered the British military time to rebuild. In their discussion Dr. Gough wonders, “What if, in the grand scheme of things, as the universe balances out good and evil, the first accidental bombing of London wasn’t an accident at all? What if it was fate turning the tides of war? What if life’s worst disasters—our greatest defeats—are the beginnings of our greatest victories?” Do you believe the bombing of London was an accident? How can accidents change the course of our own lives? On a personal level, how can we turn our defeats into victories?

7. After being turned down in Germany, fuze designer Herbert Rühlemann took his bomb fuzes to the British War Office and tried to garner interest. When nothing came of his effort, he returned to Germany to then convince German Luftwaffe chief, Hermann Göring of their brilliance. Have you ever missed an opportunity in your life that may have completely changed your future? Do you still have regrets? Have you ever passed up an opportunity and it proved the right choice? How can we tell the difference?

8. Walther Strump believed that, “Few acts of human expression are more intimate and profound as that of a hand-penned letter.” Audrey added, “A well-thought-through letter whispers with sight, touch, smell—and most importantly, time.” With today’s fast paced communications—phone text and email—what might be the merits in sending a hand written letter? Do you have any letters that you keep and cherish? If so, what makes them special? If you sent someone a heartfelt, handwritten letter, would they be more likely to keep it, even reread it, over the same message sent electronically?

9. Audrey’s primary job with WVS was to help evacuate children from London. On a particularly trying occasion, she asks, “Are we helping as we scurry these children away from their families and this wretched war, Claire? Or are we creating deeper scars from the separation?” Is she right to doubt? Does a heightened risk of death for the children staying in London, outweigh the psychological harm that may come from family separation? If you had been a parent with children, living in London, what would you have done?

10. When Audrey is close to death, she tells Lilli that she has a choice, that she can decide for herself whether to stay or not, and that “others were there beckoning to her.” While everyone must eventually die, do you believe that some have a choice in the particular moment? Can we will ourselves to live or to die?

11. By the time Germany bombed England, they had already invaded Czechoslovakia, Poland, Denmark, Norway, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. Still, the United States had not entered the war because many Americans were reluctant. While war is never pleasant, was the US wrong to wait? How does a person and/or country draw the line between abhorring war but defending freedom?

12. In the letter Wes writes to the Colonel after the man’s death, Wes notes, “One of the first questions you ever asked me was if I had prepared myself for the afterlife. It seems that I never gave you a proper answer, and now find myself wondering what an afterlife might look like. Can you see us? Can you somehow continue to make a difference in our lives?” How would you answer Wes’s questions about those who have passed?

13. Pike offers Wes thanks for being friendly, since officers and sappers in the British army usually don’t mix. He then shares that his mother sat beside a university professor in a bomb shelter and the two had a pleasant conversation, something that wouldn’t have happened outside a war because of the country’s societal classes. Why does it take a war or similar tragedy to bring

people together? What else about war is “nice” (as Pike put it)? Bringing the concept closer to home, what benefits arose from the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020?

14. Audrey asks Wes if death scares him. She later says, “In my view, I think we place too much importance on death. And why? People have been getting maimed and killed for thousands of years, haven’t they? Doesn’t life end as easily as it begins? We should keep a sense of proportion about it.” Is she right? Does death scare you? If so, should it? What might we do in our lives to alleviate the fear of death?

15. In Lilli’s final letter, she describes the destruction in Hamburg inflicted by an Allied reprisal bombing codenamed Gomorrah, where because of the subsequent fires, more people died in a single day than in all of England during the Blitz. Was the Allied response justified?

16. When remembering Audrey, Lilli’s says, “She died saving children. I can think of no better epitaph for a person’s life.” How would you like your epitaph to read? What can you do today to insure that will happen? To that end, in contemplating Colonel Moore’s question about being prepared to die, Wes later answered saying, “In looking back, I was. What I wasn’t properly prepared for was to live—and that is what I’m working toward.” Why is living sometimes harder than dying?

17. Wes writes that Audrey was someone who few would remember, but whom he would never forget. He adds that her life prods us all to ask the same echoing questions. “Do I matter? Can I make a difference? Is there more?” These seem to be universal questions that have been posed since the dawn of time. Why do these questions persist? Have you found answers to them yet?

18. In writing to Audrey, Wes notes, “In my fairytale ending, we’d have both survived the war and called it a miracle, but it seems that triumph in life is infinitely more subtle.” While the books ending might not be called a “fairytale ending”, would you consider it a happy ending? If you were the writer, how would you have ended the story? What do you suppose Wes means by calling triumph “infinitely more subtle”?

19. What kind of woman was Nathelle? If you knew your partner or spouse had once deeply loved another, would that notion bother you? Why didn’t it seem to bother Nathelle? Was her approach healthy? If so, what can we do to be more like her?

20. Why are so many stories set during WWII? A social media influencer in Britain said in an interview that we should teach children today *less* about World War II because, "it's so intense." Do you agree? What specific lessons might today’s generation learn from WWII?

21. In Wright’s follow-up story, *Saving Rachel McCally* (free to download), he delves into PTSD, including the likelihood that both Wes and Audrey suffered from its’ symptoms. How much do you know about PTSD? Does one have to have been at war for PTSD to touch their life? How can someone battle its’ symptoms?