

## Pink Carnation Readers' Guide

Meg Cabot called *The Secret History of the Pink Carnation* “a genre-bending read.” The book contains elements of chick lit, mystery, comedy, adventure stories, and historical romance. Discuss how the story uses and subverts these various traditions. How would you classify the book, and why?

In the transition between 2003 and 1803, we become intimately acquainted with two very different sorts of heroines. How does Amy's character contrast with Eloise's?

Discuss the effect of the book in a book. Are there parallels between the modern and historical stories? Is Eloise a frame or a foil?

Amy's “necklace of stars” attains great significance in her interactions with Richard. What does the necklace of stars symbolize? What does it mean to Amy?

When Amy discovers a wounded man in the ballroom, she immediately assumes he must be a member of the League of the Purple Gentian. Who did you think the wounded man might be?

Due to experiences in his past, Richard decides early in the novel not to share his secret identity with Amy, and holds to that resolution, despite their growing intimacy. Do you find Richard's reasons compelling? Is he driven by loyalty to his League, or fear of having made another romantic misjudgment? If you were Amy, would you find his actions forgivable?

What do Richard's interactions with his family tell us about him as a character?

The Purple Gentian takes his place as part of a long tradition of fictional spies. Discuss the ways in which Richard embodies or deviates from the trope of the dashing hero. Do his deviations from the archetype undermine his role or make him a more convincing hero? Do you take Richard's role as a spy seriously, or is he more of a parody?

Amy and Jane serve as foils for each other throughout the novel, yet Jane's decision at the end of the novel calls into question the depth of the differences between them. In what ways are Amy and Jane secretly alike? Is Jane really the sensible cousin?

To what extent are both the modern and historical characters' actions driven by a fascination with the past? Are they more affected by the historical past, or their own personal pasts?

Growing up in Shropshire, Amy considers herself a stranger, both in England, and in her uncle's family. Once in France, Amy pretends not to speak the language, and finds very little in common with her brother. By the end of the book, would you say that Amy considers herself English or French? How would she define her relationship with her family? What does this say about the nature of belonging?

Although the historical story revolves around Richard and Amy much of their tale, including their final declaration of their feelings, takes place in the midst of a group of their friends and relations. Do you feel that the presence of secondary characters adds to or detracts from Amy and Richard's love story? Do the ensemble cast steal the show?