

About The Pearl Thief

IN BRIEF

From the internationally acclaimed bestselling author of *Code Name Verity* comes a stunning new story of pearls, love and murder – a mystery with all the suspense of an Agatha Christie and the intrigue of *Downton Abbey*.

IN DETAIL

Sixteen-year-old Julie Beaufort-Stuart is returning to her family's ancestral home in Perthshire for one last summer. It is not an idyllic return to childhood. Her grandfather's death has forced the sale of the house and estate and this will be a summer of goodbyes. Not least to the McEwen family – Highland Travellers who have been part of the landscape for as long as anyone can remember – loved by the family, loathed by the authorities. Tensions are already high when a respected London archivist goes missing, presumed murdered. Suspicion quickly falls on the McEwens but Julie knows not one of them would do such a thing and is determined to prove everyone wrong. And then she notices the family's treasure trove of pearls is missing.

This beautiful and evocative novel is the story of the irrepressible and unforgettable Julie, set in the year before the Second World War and the events of *Code Name Verity*. It is also a powerful portrayal of a community under pressure and one girl's determination for justice.

ELIZABETH WEIN was born in New York and grew up in England, Jamaica and Pennsylvania. She has now lived in Scotland for nearly twenty years. Elizabeth is a devotee of classic mystery novels, and co-wrote her first mystery story, *The Hidden Treasure*, at the age of seven. She is a collector of vintage fashion accessories and a member of the Ninety-Nines, the International Organization of Women Pilots. Her novel *Code Name Verity* was a *New York Times* bestseller and has been nominated for over fifty awards.





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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. Julie admires Ellen for 'being herself', unconstrained by the social pressures Julie feels. Do you think Ellen is freer than Julie?
- 2. Ellen accuses Julie of thoughtlessly taking everything she wants from life. Is that a fair accusation? Does Julie's attitude to giving and taking change during the story? Does Ellen's?
- 3. How do you think Ellen feels about Julie?
- 4. How does the appearance of the singer Le Sphinx contribute to the overall story?
- 5. Do you think Julie means it when she tells Mary Kinnaird she wants to be like her? What about Mary might Julie admire?
- 6. Some of the characters can 'switch on' a heavy Scottish accent. How do they use this ability in different social situations?
- 7. The Travellers face terrible discrimination from a number of characters in the novel, but are accepted by others. Who accepts them and who doesn't? Why do you think this might be?
- 8. Julie bonds with a number of people in the novel who are 'outsiders' Ellen and Euan McEwen, Frank Dunbar, Mary Kinnaird and Le Sphinx. Do you think Julie is an outsider in some ways?
- 9. How did you feel about Frank Dunbar at the end of the novel?
- 10. The idea of violation comes up many times in the story: violation of privacy, of bodies, of land, of history and of law. What are the weapons that the women in the book can use to fight back against these trespasses? Are they different to those available to men?
- 11. How are some of the issues experienced by *The Pearl Thief*'s characters in 1938 relevant to us today?





