

## **Code Name Helene by Ariel Lawhon: Discussion and Topics for Discussion**

1. Nancy's argument with her Hearst editor takes place in 1936, but is probably not all that different from challenges that face women in the workforce today. We later learn that Nancy agreed was told that her work for Hearst would be published without not carry a byline...unless she took a male pen name, which she refused to do. What would you have done?
2. "Men don't know what to do with a woman who can clip her own cigar." What are the implications of Stephanie's statement? And does it still hold true today?
3. Nancy is accused of using "profanity as a weapon" to gain her male colleagues' respect. Do you think this is true?
4. What are your thoughts regarding the shift of perspective from first person to third person? Did it result in a more multi-dimensional portrait of Nancy?
5. Discuss the shift back and forth in time between Nancy's life before and during the war. Did it give you a different view at the ways in which war alters lives, both great and small?
6. "The thing about lipstick, the reason it's so powerful, is that it is distracting." Nancy's beloved red lipstick also gives her confidence. Is there a product or accessory that does something similar for you?
7. Had you heard of Nancy Wake prior to reading *Code Name Hélène*? Did the novel inspire you to learn more about her?
8. Did the dynamic of Nancy and Henri's relationship surprise you? In what ways does it differ from other stories of love in wartime that you have read before?
9. The consequences of Marceline's betrayal are staggering. Do you think her obsession with Henri is the only reason for her choices? Or is her decision deeper and more complex?
10. Nancy's trek across the Pyrenees and her 72-hour bike ride are harrowing. Her grit and stamina are awe-inspiring. Do you think you could endure the physical and mental stress of such a journey?
11. What is the one thing about Nancy that you found the most surprising
12. If *Code Name Hélène* were made into a movie, who would you like to see cast in the roles of Nancy and Henri?
13. Did you read the Author's Note before or after finishing the novel? How did it change your feelings about the novel?

*These questions are from the publisher.*