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The Lily and the Rose

By Jackie French

Book Summary:

Sophie Higgs, heiress to an Australian cattle empire and graduate of the mysterious Miss Lily's 'school' of charm and intrigue, must find a way across war-battered Europe to rescue her friend Hannelore, the Prinzessin Von Arneburg, from Munich revolutionaries.

But in this new world, nothing is clear, in politics or in love.

Even as Sophie carves out an empire larger than her father's, she is torn between her complex love for Nigel, the Earl of Shillings; the impossibilities of marriage with Dolphie, German aristocrat and patriot, and the mysterious 'John' who camps on her Australian property to carve a cross for every man he sent to death in the trenches.

In this sequel to *Miss Lily's Lovely Ladies* Sophie draws us further into this intriguing and romantic story filled with unforgettable characters - from the Prince of Wales to the valiant army of women who helped win a war and then were forgotten.

Themes

Woman's rights, independence, class and wealth, WW1 causes and effects. Love and sexuality, childhood, loss, colonials and empire, racial prejudice

Recommended for: Upper Secondary Students

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Introduction

'When I was young on the North West Frontier men spoke of 'when the war is over'. War does not stop on the day of ceasefire. Somewhere, always, the hounds of war snuffle in the gutters, hunting for the next battle.'
Miss Lily, 1914

The Lily and the Rose, sequel to Jackie French's *Miss Lily's Lovely Ladies*, and second in a projected series, opens on 30 March 1919 in the home of Prinzessin Hannelore von Arnenberg in the Bavarian Soviet Republic. The action then moves to the central character in this series, Sophie Higgs, in London, on 1 May 1919, after a brutal war spent largely in France establishing hospitals. Sophie is looking forward to returning home to Australia, but a letter from her friend Hannelore seeking help convinces her that she must travel to her side.

Thus begins another hair-raising adventure for the indefatigable Sophie Higgs which reveals the continuing tensions in post World War One Europe and explores the difficult choices to be made when torn between lovers and between rival commitments to different nations.

Plot Summary

With the help of the erstwhile Jones, butler to another friend, Nigel Vaile, Earl of Shillings, James Lorrimer, Sophie's former suitor and a career diplomat, and Mr Slithersole, her London business agent, Sophie assembles a team of people with the necessary skills to brave entering war-torn Germany which is fraught with danger and intrigue. Sophie and Jones, together with Green, another of Nigel's servants, and Georgina FitzWilliam, cousin to Emily Sevenoaks, Sophie's former classmate, depart on their escapade. In return for his assistance, Lorrimer requests that Sophie discover any information on British Soviets' collaboration with Germany. She travels via France where she returns to the village she had made her headquarters and reunites with Jean-Marie, her young helper, and with the hospital sisters, whom she assists in their plan to establish a soup factory (pp 76–7). She also learns from Green of the dangerous work done by the women's resistance movement, La Dame Blanche, and their secret knitting codes (pp 80–1), and that Green had been a member. Her journey is cloaked as a business mission and she makes an excellent deal with a Herr Feinberg in Munich, but witnesses a brutal shooting from which they escape with a bribe. She eventually reaches Hannelore to discover that Dolphie, her brother, has concocted an elaborate ruse to lure Sophie there in order to gain her fortune. She declines his offer of marriage; Green and Jones rescue her; and she leaves some funds for Hannelore suggesting that she, too, invest in a soup canning factory.

She resumes her journey with Green and Georgina FitzWilliam, by ship from Gibraltar to Australia. The latter is secretly joined by her son, Timothy, but evinces her trust in Sophie by introducing them. Sophie and Green make plans to establish Georgina in a house in Melbourne. But towards the end of the journey her estranged husband William, inveigles his way on board; Sophie and Green dupe him into a compromising situation and he commits suicide.

Sophie arrives home just in time to care for her ailing father Jeremiah Higgs, the wealthy producer of Higgs's Corned Beef, before he dies on 15/12/19. She re-structures the Higgs

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board to include Miss Thwaites, her former governess and Jeremiah's dearly-loved companion, as Chairman, Cousin Oswald, as General Manager, and Sophie herself as President. She uses her charms to convince both Oswald and Trevor Scales, manager of their Darlington factory, to remain with Higgs, despite women having assumed senior positions. Georgina takes a job at Thuringa, Sophie's station, where Timothy is educated prior to being sent to a Sydney boarding school. Sophie meanwhile hatches some inventive business schemes. While visiting the family station Sophie befriends Midge Harrison and on her property meets a shell-shocked veteran 'John at the Gate', who spends his time carving crosses in memory of the dead (p 204) and to whom she is instantly attracted. She runs for parliament against Malcolm Overhill's father and although she narrowly misses winning, she ensures a win for Sam Upton, the Labor candidate, via her preferences. She retreats to the Harrison station and shares a passionate night with John but then receives a message that Nigel Vaile is gravely ill with a tumour and will be operated on in four weeks. She dispatches Green by ship but decides to embark on a perilous journey by air and land in order to reach him more quickly. She flies first with Mrs Randolph Henderson who lands at her friend Mrs MacIntosh's property. They then meet a disfigured pilot, Eugenia Morrison who requests that in return for flying Sophie on the next leg of the journey, she negotiate sales for her. Sophie, in turn, suggests that these women set up a company with her assistance.

Assisted by her network of employees, and despite several mishaps, they make it to Calcutta from whence she travels by luxury carriage and is then transferred to the Orient Express where a maid awaits with a new wardrobe. She reaches Vienna and a man delivers an envelope of cash and a wire from home; all goes well until the train hits snow and an avalanche. They are nevertheless able to make their way further and disembark in Paris where a war-time friend Ethel is waiting, as arranged by Midge. She makes a puzzling call to Shillings answered by an unknown butler who advises that Jones and Shillings are unavailable and that landing a plane will be difficult as zebras and a rhino may be on the field where Sophie's plane is to land! Ethel's nephew flies the plane and they land to find not only exotic animals but a costume party in progress organised by Claude (Nigel's nephew) and Beatrice Vaile. Sophie meets David, Prince of Wales, who takes an instant shine to her. She escapes the madness to reunite with Nigel and Jones but the Vailes interrupt saying she's not invited. Sophie surprises them all by announcing that she is to marry Nigel by special licence the next day and the Vailes' guests are asked to leave.

It is now 1927, and they marry despite Nigel's grave illness, after which Sophie discovers she is pregnant, although is unsure whose child she is carrying. She insists on arranging Nigel's operation at Shillings where her experience of war nursing ensures the surgery is clean. Sophie's blissful marriage is interrupted by a letter from Midge enclosing a note from John left for Sophie, after their night of love, which she had missed. Sophie contacts James Lorrimer requesting that he discover John's origins but he's unsuccessful. Sophie, nearing birth, receives a visit from Lady Boniface FitzWilliam, Timothy's grandmother, and promises to invite Georgina and Timothy to the christening. Sophie gives birth to twins, Rose and Daniel, and ever inventive, hatches the idea of tinned baby food! Though yearning for home she organises a lavish christening at Vaile House in London attended by many famous people. Meanwhile, Hannelore has established a factory but rejects a suitor, Ernst, due to her inability to have children subsequent to

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her brutal rape. Dolphie then asks her to be his hostess as ambassador in London and she accepts. Hannelore arrives with news of her 'friend' Adolph Hitler. The novel ends enigmatically with Miss Lily returning to meet her 'niece' and 'nephew'.

In the previous novel, Sophie was courted by Malcolm Overhill, James Lorrimer, Angus McIntyre, Count Adolphus von Hoffenhausen (Dolphie) and latterly by Nigel Vaile. In this one, both John at the Gate and Nigel Vaile vie for her hand. So Sophie's adventures are romantic, but this novel is not a romance. It is a plea for women's rights, a eulogy for the losses of World War One, a lament for the continuing unrest in Europe, and a premonition of the impending crisis of World War Two. It is a sweeping historical saga about love and loss, to be continued in a further volume.

Before Reading

- What do you know of Jackie French's other work?
- What do you know about what happened during and after World War One to those who both fought in the conflict or served on the home front? And about their lives during and after the war?
- What do you know of the political power balance in Europe before and after World War One

While Reading

- Take note of major themes or issues to discuss later.
- Make a character chart listing the major and minor characters.
- Trace a 'character arc' for one of the characters noting changes in their personalities, eg. Georgina FitzWilliam.

After Reading

Activity: Each chapter begins with a quote (largely from Miss Lily) each of which acts as a signpost for Sophie's adventures and actions. Discuss one of these quotes in relation to the themes of the novel.

Activity: Choose a major theme and analyse how it is presented in this novel, choosing passages which relate to it. [See also **Suggested Tasks for Assessment** below.]

Activity: Which character would you like to have seen more of and why?

Activity: What other title or cover might this book have had? Design your own cover

Style and Structure

Discussion Point: The story is told in **alternating chapters** mostly from Sophie's point of view but sometimes from Hannelore's, also via various letters between Sophie and Nigel, Sophie and James Lorimer, and from Dolfie and 'Sloggers' to Sophie. These alternative views of the action allow the writer to both maintain suspense and to lay tantalising clues to be guessed at and discovered.

Discussion Point: Investigate the use of **literary devices** in this novel and how they are used to enhance themes. For example, read this passage: 'She was so tired of the grey of London days, the evening snuffle of the yellow fog, the river stench suddenly shivering its varied smells into unexpected places, ... trying to forget.' (p 22)

Discussion Point: This is an historical novel, but what other genres does it fall into?

Theme: Women's Rights and Independence

'For two years I created and managed three hospitals and a refugee centre. I was a person. Then the war ended. I became 'just a woman' again. No matter how society may decide, my dear, never think of yourself as 'just a woman'.'

Sophie in a letter to her granddaughter, undated.

Discussion Point: Sophie Higgs, Georgina FitzWilliam, Green, and Midge Harrison are all very independent women. Discuss the theme of women's rights as it is depicted in this novel.

Discussion Point: Inheritance law disadvantaged women like Lady Georgina FitzWilliam who, despite having managed the family estate during the war, was disinherited by her second cousin Hartley on his return from Palestine, as all her other male relatives had died. Research this law and when it changed.

Discussion Point: "He preferred a riding whip, but sometimes used a cane for variety.' (p 17) Domestic violence is often linked to poverty or deprivation; but Georgina's abuse by her titled husband William FitzWilliam tells a different story. Despite this abuse, FitzWilliam also has legal rights to their son Timothy (pp 18–19) until he turns twenty-one. What does this suggest about the 'bonds of matrimony' in this society?

Discussion Point: 'A gentleman stands when a woman enters a room. He is silent when she wishes to speak. Of course that doesn't mean that he will listen.' Miss Lily 1914 (p 61). This quote summarises the double standards which existed, and may still exist, in male attitudes to women.

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Discussion Point: Aviation was in its infancy during this time, so that women aviators (such as the fictional Mrs Randolph Henderson and Eugenia Morrison who appear in this novel) are pioneers of both aviation and the women's movement. Research and discuss the achievements of women aviators such as Amy Johnson (1903–1941), Amelia Earhart (1897–1937), Bessie Coleman (1892–1926) or Jean Batten (1909–1982).

Theme: Class and Wealth

'You and my cousin are exactly the type of women I despise. You play with the world. And, yes, you do good works. But only because you enjoy it. You are even enjoying this escapade to Germany.' (p 63)

Discussion Point: Sophie is a remarkable woman, but without her wealth her achievements would have been far more difficult to engineer.

Discussion Point: Sophie, despite her war time privations, immediately realises that she needs a personal maid (p 7) if she is to present herself well. Her standing in society depends upon it!

World War One – Aftermath

'Prime Minister Lloyd George had promised England 'a land fit for heroes' in the last election. This Year of Victory 1919 had not seen that promise kept. A million men already unemployed — naturally no one counted the women cast out of work with the end of the war, ... Much of the army still waited to be demobbed; ... This was not the land of peace ... Who still had the will to fight in 1919, where almost every country in the war was exhausted emotionally economically and by the influenza that has killed faster and more efficiently even than the guns?' (p 5)

Discussion Point: Read the full passage from which the quotes above are taken and discuss the social and economic situation described.

Discussion Point: Research the variety of physical and mental injuries suffered in World War One and how many men and women were left damaged afterwards. How did society deal with them?

Discussion Point: She had seen faces like this before: in men with shell shock, a term the military banned in 1916, worried about pension demands when the war was over.' (p 15) Research this illness and how it was treated after the war.

Discussion Point: John's mental and emotional damage as a result of WWI has led to his retreat from the world to a place of simplicity and solitude. Many such returned soldiers simply rejected society and became either homeless hermits or drunkards, or both.

Discussion Point: The Flu Pandemic of January 1918 to December 1920 killed 500 million people, mostly formerly healthy young adults, around the world. Research this topic further.

Discussion Point: The demise of all of Lady Georgina FitzWilliam's relatives is described by Emily (pp 12–13). It was not uncommon for people to suffer multiple family losses in war. How must this have impacted on the survivors both emotionally and financially?

Discussion Point: Research the lives of returned service people and also those who assisted on the home front after World War One. What level of unemployment was suffered in the aftermath?

Discussion Point: 'Most startling was the loss of the 'unknown army' of women, like Sophie, who had volunteered for the duration, manning ambulances, first aid stations, refugee relief booths, uncounted and unacknowledged, the vastness of their numbers an embarrassment... the wounded' (p 72) How did women respond when the vital work they had done in war zones during World War One was not acknowledged, their role in the resistance was unrecognised, and when work they had also done on the home front was taken from them?

Discussion Point: Another outcome was that social classes began to become more fluid as working-class people returned to a society whose rules they began to question. *'Munitions work has made girls think themselves too good for domestic services' continued Emily.* *'And why should Lloyd George give those ex-servicemen just lounging around the pubs an allowance when there are footmen's and gardener's jobs going begging?' Possibly because having spent four years in the trenches saving your life those ex-servicemen don't want to spend what is left of their own lives polishing our silver, thought Sophie.* (p 7).

Discuss this quote and this subject as it is explored throughout the novel.

Discussion Point: Sophie is highly critical of the war when she visits James Lorrimer: *'what angers me most about the war isn't the loss, or the tragedy. It was the sheer inefficiency... If my father ran his factories like our leaders muddled the war, he'd never have made his first sixpence.'* (pp 30–1) Is she correct?

Discussion Point: A strong theme in the novel is that the war is not over. Green says: *'This isn't the end of the war. Even when they sign the Treaty it won't be the end. It's just a pause.'* (p 80)

Research this topic further.

Discussion Point: The novel refers to *'new documents of identity now required to enter another country'* (p 73). Research the history of such passport documentation and changes in requirements since.

Discussion Point: *'So many of the young men she had danced with having gone forever. It would be impossible for dancing to ever be memory free again.'* (p 154)

Such guilty feelings must have plagued survivors after the war.

Discussion Point: Chapter 34 gives a concise overview of the social and political situation in the 20s.

Read and discuss.

Discussion Point: Throughout the novel, various political events or topics are referred to, for example, *British Soviet spies* (pp 36–7).

Research any one of these and discuss.

Discussion Point: Carefully researched details such as make-up worn (p 94), perfumes (p 101) used, and food eaten (pp 119) enhances the credibility of the novel.

Discuss any passage you found particularly enriching or informative.

Theme: Patriotism and Nationhood

'And she had given her life for her country, as she had been bred to do, not this socialist republic but the earth, the trees, the people of her Germany...' (p 3)

Discussion Point: Hannelore (Chapter 1), although willing to sacrifice her life, survives a brutal attack. Hannelore and Dolphie discuss the reasons he rejected going to Australia with Sophie (pp 122–3) and their subterfuge (pp 136–7). These and other sections in the novel evince the patriotism of these characters. But what personal price do patriots often find themselves paying?

Discussion Point: Wars are brought about by conflicts between nations and patriotism.

Discussion Point: Sophie is committed to Australia and her business there but chooses to marry and live in England. How conflicted will she become in her allegiance to two countries as her life progresses?

Theme: Love and Sexuality

'She didn't know what to say. Nor what to feel. For the last twenty minutes she had been with a woman a woman who she loved and felt she knew as deeply as anyone on earth. And now she was with a man, who she also loved, but in a different way...' (p 49)

Discussion Point: Miss Lily appears less frequently in this novel – she meets Sophie at the Ritz (pp 44–50) and meets the twin babies at the end (pp 369–71). Since she is actually Nigel Vaile, now Sophie's husband, this is a sexually ambiguous scene. What does this novel suggest about such ambiguity?

Discussion Point: 29 year old Sophie has had little experiences of sexual love until her passion is aroused first by John, and then by Nigel whom she marries. What does this novel suggest about sexuality and romantic love?

Discussion Point: Sexual freedom is promoted in this novel, eg. Green disappears with ship's engineer (p 151) and she and Sophie joke about her exploits.

Theme: Colonials and Empire

'Australia was forbidden from selling to any nation other than the Motherland... But that was the condition the English government demanded of its loyal colonies' (p 71)

Discussion Point: Sophie has to negotiate complicated trade laws dictated by the British, in order to sell Higgs's Corned Beef to the French as an 'export from England'. Research this topic further and when such laws began to be changed.

Discussion Point: What other aspects of colonialism did you note in this novel?

Theme: -Racial Prejudice

'It had been more than a decade since native workers had been chained on any farm in Bald Hill. (p 199)

Discussion Point: This novel refers obliquely to Indigenous issues, for example: 'Can't blame them,' he added. 'It's a bit like paying them rent, I reckon. But can't say that to the money-wallahs down in Adelaide.' (p 258) Here there is an implication that not only have Aboriginal people been cheated of wages but cheated of their land as well.

Discussion Point: What other sections of the novel refer to Non-Indigenous/Indigenous relations in Australia?

Theme: Hope and Survival

'And hope had been fulfilled.' (p 307)

Discussion Point: Survival is a consistent theme in his novel and its prequel. How do hope and survival operate as twin themes here?

Discussion Point: Sophie survives untold challenges to find herself in Nigel's arms. Is this what she has always hoped for?

Values

Activity: Independence, kindness, bravery, ingenuity, fortitude, generosity, are some of the values evinced in this text. Choose one and relate it to a particular incident in this novel

Discussion Point:- 'But at heart I am a ... a purveyor of corned beef. I like feeding people. Organising people.' (p 48) Discuss Sophie's attitude to her business and to her voluntary work and the values evinced in both.

Activity: Choose a character and list the values evinced by their behaviour, eg. Green or Jones.

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Responding

Read and discuss the following quotes and record the theme related to it:

Quote	Theme
Do you too put loyalty to humanity above loyalty to your country?' (p 34)	
'Grace is a luxury, my dears. A charlady, bent from work, cannot be graceful. Never forget that you are privileged. Always give back what you can.' Miss Lily, 1914 (p 69)	
'For even at the worst of times there is beauty. And when the senses are sharpened you may see it even more wonderfully than before.' Miss Lily, 1914 (p 86)	
'And there is a sunrise every day.' (p 120)	
'I wish I could tell you that love lasts forever. It does not.' Miss Lily, 1914 (p 136)	
A woman loves her son. A man owns him.' Miss Lily, 1914 (p 157)	
'You must know the rules of society to learn how to break them cleanly.' Miss Lily, 1914 (p 206)	
'It has often been quoted that freedom cannot be given. It must be taken. Too many slaves cling to their slavery. It takes courage to be truly free. But sometimes the right person, the right words at the right time, can give that courage, for long enough for freedom to be real.' Miss Lily, 1911 (p 233)	
The true structure of our lives is friends.' Miss Lily, 1914 (p 287)	
'But we have the League of Nations now. And Hannelore's Herr Hitler, working to move Germany away from the Prussian militarists to true peace and prosperity.' (p 370)	

Comprehension and Debating Questions

- Women in this novel and its prequel demonstrate that they are the equal of men, despite the inequality they suffer in terms of employment opportunities and social conditions. Which of the women in this novel did you find most impressive or admirable, and why?
- Sophie's motives are called into question by Georgina (p 63). Is Sophie wise, astute and noble in her decisions, or impulsive and reckless?
- Sophie and Green contrive to trick the abusive William FitzWilliam into a compromising situation, which prompts his suicide. Are their actions justified?
- Debate the statement: 'An end to World War One was proclaimed in 1918 but it didn't really end then for all the people of Europe.'
- In this novel a new suitor, John, appears to win Sophie's affections, but Sophie opts to marry Nigel instead. Why?

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Suggested Tasks for Assessment

- Write a letter as if penned by Emily Sevenoaks to Sophie, congratulating her on her marriage and on the birth of twins.
- Sketch an architectural plan for the layout of the Shillings Estate from clues made available in both books.
- Create a book trailer for this work.
- Read Sophie's letter to James (pp 145–7) explaining the situation in Germany, and her letter to Nigel (pp 147–8) explaining the outcomes of their visit to Germany, her enjoyment of Georgina and Green's company and declaring her love for Nigel and Miss Lily. Read Nigel's letter in return (pp 176–7) about his duties and ominous signs of war in future. What information do these three letters convey?
- Choose an issue raised in this novel and research it, eg. World War One – Aftermath. Then write a considered essay outlining the points you've discovered on this topic.
- This is the second in a series. Consider the end of this novel and what it suggests might happen in a third book or sequel. Write a plot summary for that sequel.

About the Author

Jackie French was the Australian Children's Laureate for 2014/15 and the 2015 Senior Australian of the Year. She is also an historian, ecologist, dyslexic, and a passionate worker for literacy, the right of all children to be able to read, and the power of books.

Jackie's writing career spans 25 years, 148 wombats, over 140 books, 36 languages, 3,721 bush rats, and over 60 awards in Australia and overseas.

Jackie is also the ACT Children's Week Ambassador, 2011 Federal Literacy Ambassador, patron of Books for Kids, YESS, and joint patron of Monkey Baa Theatre for Young People with Susanne Gervais and Morris Gleitzman. She is also a director of The Wombat Foundation that raises funds for research into the preservation of the endangered northern hairy nosed wombat.

Jackie is a passionate advocate of help for children with learning difficulties as well as the conservation of wildlife and our planet. For nearly 40 years she has studied the species in the bush where she lives, with publications ranging from scientific articles on wombat ecology or endangered species to her ground breaking books on theories and practices for pest and weed ecology and more popular books on subjects like backyard self-sufficiency.

Jackie and her husband Bryan live in the Araluen valley, a deep valley on the edge of the Deua wilderness area. Most of their property is now a Conservation Refuge for the many rare and endangered species of the area. They live in a homemade stone house, with a waterwheel Bryan made as well as solar panels to power their house, with an experimental orchard of over 800 fruit trees and more than 272 kinds of fruit that show how farming can coexist with wildlife. Jackie writes columns for the Canberra Times, Australian Women's Weekly, Earthgarden Magazine, Australian Wellbeing and Gardening Australia. Her garden rambles over about 4 hectares, and there is never a time when there aren't basketsful of many kinds of fruit to pick. See her website: <http://www.jackiefrench.com/about>

Junior and YA Fiction – Post-World War One

Bernard, Patricia *Fords and Flying Machines: The Diary of Jack McLaren, Longreach, 1919–1921* (My Australian Story) Scholastic, 2003.

Farmer, Penelope *Charlotte Sometimes* Chatto & Windus, 1969.

Gleitzman, Morris *Loyal Creatures* Viking, 2015.

Greenwood, Kerry *The Deadly Flu [A Different Sort of Real: The Diary of Charlotte McKenzie, Melbourne, 1918–1919]* (My Australian Story) Scholastic, 2001.

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Historical.Novels.info

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[See also list of adult novels: 'Fiction' World War One Historical Association

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Gibson, Karen Bush *Women Aviators* Chicago Review Press, 2013.

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Hill, David *Sky High: Jean Batten's Incredible Flying Adventures* Ill. by Phoebe Morris. Picture Puffin, 2017 [P/book].

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<<https://www.pragmaticmom.com/2013/01/best-books-for-girls/>>

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'Passport' *Wikipedia*

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'The Great Gatsby' (2013) Director: Baz Luhrman.

'Midnight in Paris' (2011) Director: Woody Allen.

'Idle Class' (1921) Director: Charles Chaplin.

[See also extensive **Bibliography** about World War One listed in the Notes on *Miss Lily's' Lovely Ladies.*]