

## Book Club Discussion Guide



*Bluebird by Genevieve Graham, Page 1 (November 2023)*

# Bluebird

## By Genevieve Graham

### About the author:

Thanks for coming to see me.

I'm a tremendously lucky lady. I have a wonderful, loving family, a beautiful home, AND I get to write. Really, I can't imagine a better life.

Decades ago (!) I went to university to be a professional oboe player. I never planned to be a writer. I never even tried to write a story until I was over forty – which is proof that you're never too old to try something new.

My passion is breathing life back into history one story at a time, and I focus on Canadian History. When you finish one of my books, I hope you will be able to say you've learned something about history, but I also hope you can say the book moved you to learn more. And I will keep bringing you more, because I love what I do!

Genevieve Graham is the USA TODAY and #1 bestselling author of *The Forgotten Home Child*, *Letters Across the Sea*, *Tides of Honour*, *Promises to Keep*, *Come from Away*, and *At the Mountain's Edge*. Her latest novel, *Bluebird*, became a national instant bestseller upon its release in April 2022. She is passionate about breathing life back into Canadian history through tales of love and adventure. She lives near Edmonton, Alberta. Visit her at [GenevieveGraham.com](https://GenevieveGraham.com) or on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram @GenGrahamAuthor.

Source: Author's website: (<https://genevievegraham.com/about-the-author/>)

## Book Club Discussion Guide



*Bluebird by Genevieve Graham, Page 2 (November 2023)*

### About this book:

#### Present Day

Cassie Simmons, a museum curator, is enthusiastic about solving mysteries from the past, and she has a personal interest in the history of the rumrunners who ferried illegal booze across the Detroit River during Prohibition. So when a cache of whisky labeled Bailey Brothers' Best is unearthed during a local home renovation, Cassie hopes to find the answers she's been searching for about the legendary family of bootleggers...

#### 1917

Corporal Jeremiah Bailey of the 1st Canadian Tunnelling Company is tasked with planting mines in the tunnels beneath enemy trenches. After Jerry is badly wounded in an explosion, he finds himself in a Belgium field hospital under the care of Adele Savard, one of Canada's nursing sisters, nicknamed "Bluebirds" for their blue gowns and white caps. As Jerry recovers, he forms a strong connection with Adele, who is from a place near his hometown of Windsor, along the Detroit River. In the midst of war, she's a welcome reminder of home, and when Jerry is sent back to the front, he can only hope that he'll see his bluebird again.

By war's end, both Jerry and Adele return home to Windsor, scarred by the horrors of what they endured overseas. When they cross paths one day, they have a chance to start over. But the city is in the grip of Prohibition, which brings exciting opportunities as well as new dangerous conflicts that threaten to destroy everything they have fought for.

Pulled from the pages of history, *Bluebird* is a compelling, luminous novel about the strength of the human spirit and the power of love to call us home.

Source: Author's website: (<https://genevievegraham.com/books/bluebird/>)

## Book Club Discussion Guide



*Bluebird by Genevieve Graham, Page 3 (November 2023)*

### Discussion Questions:

1. The novel follows Adele Savard, a World War I Nursing Sister working at a Clearing Station in war-torn Belgium. Had you known about the history of the Bluebirds before this book?
2. The Bluebirds were in the war in a dual capacity as medical workers and caring citizens. What are some examples of how Adele fulfills these duties? And what does the need for compassion as much as medical training reveal about the nature of war? Consider the fact that Adele—and many nurses—had no idea of what they would see overseas.
3. The horrors of trench warfare are often discussed in relation to World War I. In *Bluebird*, the author shines a light on tunnel warfare by having Jerry and John Bailey serve as tunnellers, digging beneath the trenches and setting mines. Were you aware of tunnellers and their function in the war? What are some of the dangers they faced as they waged war below the battlefields that perhaps the soldiers in the trenches did not?
4. Both Adele and Jerry's fathers served in the Boer War, but the Great War was the first war to be fought on the global stage. In its wake, nearly everyone suffers from shell shock, or PTSD. Discuss how the scale of the death and devastation haunts the characters after peace is reached.
5. Similarly, how is personal trauma a theme in the novel? Consider what each generation of the Bailey family endures, including Cassie in the present day. How do love and family help heal these wounds? And what does this tell us about the strength of the human spirit?
6. Matthew tells Cassie that “these days we live in the ‘now’ so much that we kind of forget the world was full of stories long before we came along.” How do the past and present storylines intersect over the course of the novel? What does this technique highlight about the legacy of history for both the personal and the public record?

## Book Club Discussion Guide



*Bluebird by Genevieve Graham, Page 4 (November 2023)*

7. When Adele and Jerry return home to Windsor, they find a city changed by the dawn of Prohibition. How do the losses they faced in the war and the subsequent Spanish Flu affect the choices they make in this dazzling—and sometimes dangerous—new era? How have their values changed? What are they willing to risk in order to feel alive again? And what aren't they?

8. The Roaring Twenties boasted increased freedoms for women and men, a burgeoning of wealth and finance, and a general questioning of traditions. What are some examples of how the characters embrace these changes? Is there a difference between those who went to war and those who did not?

9. Comparing Adele and Marie, discuss the opportunities and expectations for women of the 1920s. How do marriage, children, and work shape their lives? And what do they desire for themselves deep down?

10. Marie is an avid supporter of the Temperance movement at the beginning of the novel. What is her reasoning? Do you think there is any merit in her position? Why does she later change her mind?

11. Al Capone said, "Prohibition has made nothing but trouble," and Adele says that Prohibition is a failure. What evidence do they have? Do you agree?

12. When Jerry and John find their father's distilling recipe, they decide to go into the whisky business, even though it's illegal. How do they rationalize their actions? Do you think Jerry and John are in business for the same reasons?

13. Discuss the theme of survivor's guilt. Which characters experience this and why? How do the characters try to redeem themselves?

14. Sibling relationships are at the very heart of this novel. Discuss the dynamics between Adele and Marie, and those between Jerry and John. How do the events of the book test those bonds?

## Book Club Discussion Guide



*Bluebird by Genevieve Graham, Page 5 (November 2023)*

15. Compare the brotherhood between Jerry and John with that of Ernie and Frank. How does loss affect who the men become?
16. The rivalry between Ernie and Jerry goes deeper than business, but knowing the formative event that shaped them, did you have greater sympathy for Ernie? Which actions can be chalked up to the heated turf wars of the day and which are rooted in personal hurt?
17. How does the ending in the past storyline bring the characters full circle? How are the themes of sacrifice, redemption, and compassion at play in that closing scene?
18. Discuss the symbolism of tunnels—and what they hide. How does the act of digging and uncovering take on different meanings in both the past and the present?
19. Consider the title, Bluebird. What do you think the bluebird represents?

Source: Simon & Schuster:

<https://www.simonandschuster.ca/books/Bluebird/Genevieve-Graham/9781982156657>