

# BOOK CLUB READING GROUP NOTES



# About the Book

**Two French storytellers and a runaway girl travel through fairytale lands, Italian theatres, and the battlefields of France in search of a place to belong as Napoleon's Empire falls, from the author of Josephine's Garden.**

Rémi Victoire is the golden child among all the theatre orphans; he dreams of a life on a Paris stage. But when this future is stolen from him, Rémi and his faithful friend Pascal turn their backs on Paris forever.

With Saskia, a runaway orphan girl, Rémi and Pascal form a performing troupe, travelling through the fairytale lands that are home to the Brothers Grimm, before finding a safe haven in Venice.

As Napoleon's vast Empire crumbles, the French storytellers discover that Paris itself is now at risk of invasion and they fear for the loved ones they have left behind.

From picturesque villages to Italian theatres and on to the battlefields outside of Paris, this is a beautifully told story about the bonds of love and friendship, the importance of stories, and finding a place to belong.

## Praise

'A vividly imagined and unforgettable tale of love, hope and friendship. Above all, though, this a novel about stories...' Better Reading

'A luminous, enthralling tale of love, treachery, treason and friendship...full of unexpected twists and turns.' Kate Forsyth on Josephine's Garden

'Spellbinding, rich and an immensely enjoyable blend of fact and fiction.' Blue Wolf Reviews on Josephine's Garden



# About the Author

Stephanie Parkyn grew up writing stories from an early age in a book-loving family in Christchurch, New Zealand. She had a rewarding career as an environmental scientist, but is now an historical fiction author with a love of travel, art and nature. She is curious about the human motivations behind the events of history and aims to illuminate women's experiences in her writing. After ten years living in Australia, she has returned to New Zealand and writes from her home overlooking the sea in Coromandel Peninsula. Stephanie's first novel, *Into the World*, was published to wide acclaim in 2017 and longlisted for the Tasmania Book Prize. *Josephine's Garden*, based on the true story of the woman who became Napoleon Bonaparte's Empress of France, was published in 2019. *The Freedom of Birds* is her third novel.

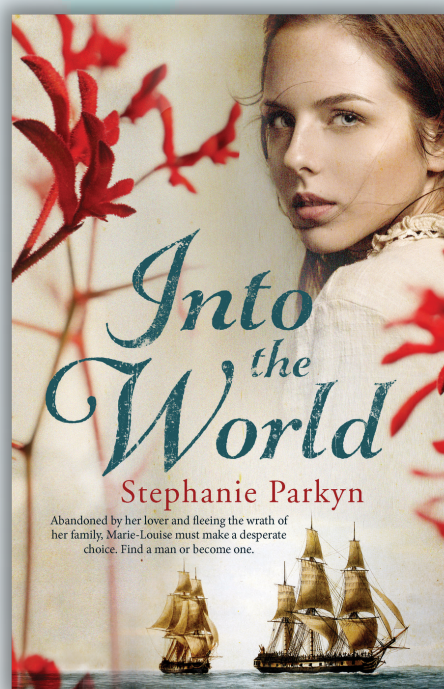


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## Also by Stephanie Parkyn



# READING GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Which character do you identify most in *The Freedom of Birds*?
2. Who do you think was the strongest mother/ parental figure in the story?
3. Do you think Pascal should have left Rémi to make his own way much earlier?
4. Do you think Cristo and Saskia's relationship mirror their roles in the theatre as inamorata? Was it doomed from the beginning?
5. Would you call Columbina a feminist? Why/ Why not? What price do women pay for their freedom in the story?
6. Do you think Gianni cared for any of the other characters?
7. Which of the characters proves to be the most resourceful?
8. What do you think is the 'art of theatre'? How does it change throughout the story?
9. Many of the characters were given up or abandoned as babies/ children, do you think this is ever defensible as a parent?
10. Napoleon's war in Europe played a significant role in *The Freedom of Birds*, how do you think this shaped each character's journey?



# READING GROUP QUESTIONS

## (Continued)

11. If you were written into *The Freedom of Birds*, what role would you play in the story?

12. Do you have any unlikely friendships in your life? How do they shape/challenge you?

### JUST FOR FUN

- Whom would you cast in the movie adaptation of *The Freedom of Birds*?
- Pick out a favourite or striking passage from the book and read it to the group.
- If you could have a chat with any character from the novel, who would it be and why? What three questions would you ask them?