

ALIAS DRAGONFLY DISCUSSION GUIDE

Based on what you've learned about Maddie Bradford and the time she lived, what opportunities would an isolated rural 19th Century girl like her have? Would she have been able to further her schooling, have a life apart from her parents and her town, go to college and escape the fate of most women at that time? What freedoms have you enjoyed that Maddie would be amazed to hear about?

1. Discuss how Maddie's accident made her feel like an outcast and a misfit, but gave her the remarkable abilities she later uses as a spy. Have you ever met a person like Maddie, someone who is so different from you that they make you feel uncomfortable?
2. Does Maddie seem like a typical teen to you? Do you relate to her insecurities, her impulsiveness, and her bravery?
3. How did the war alter Maddie's future?
4. If you lived during the Civil War, what side would you have been on? Would it depend on what part of the country you grew up in, or what your parent's believed, or how you felt about slavery? Do you know people living today for whom the Civil War still stirs strong emotions? If so, why?
5. What made Maddie such a great spy? How did she convince Timothy Webster that she was right for the job? And why did Detective Allan Pinkerton allow her to work for him? Why do you think Maddie's time in Aunt Salome's boardinghouse convinced her to disguise herself as a boy and go to her father's camp? Did other women of the time actually become soldiers and fight alongside men? What did Rose Greenhow represent to Maddie and others who knew of her extremist sensibilities? Did you have sympathy for Rose and her daughter? How was Rose different from the fanatics we read about today? Or do you think Rose was a patriot who believed in the Confederate cause?
6. What did Maddie see in Jake Whitestone that made her sympathetic to him? Did reporters like Jake play a large role in the Civil War? The push-pull of their relationship was confusing to Maddie. Why?
7. What were Maddie's views about slavery? And what does Nellie represent? Were there other African-American men like Isaac risking their lives to help slaves achieve freedom?

8. Maddie says she is a different kind of soldier in the war. Do you think a girl like Maddie would ever be able to resume her old life again if she survives the war? Would an organization like the CIA employ a girl like Maddie to work in the intelligence community today? How do you think the young men and women fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan have been hardened and changed by their war experiences? Because then as now, spies are offered no protections under the laws of war, how would you feel if you were fighting for your country out of uniform? Would you be able to survive a capture? How hard would it be not to betray your superiors, your friends, and your country?
9. If you could tell Maddie about what happened after the Civil War, how do you think she would feel about the Reconstruction era, African-Americans, women gaining the right to vote, the harsh Jim Crow laws that were enacted, the Ku Klux Klan, the hard-won struggle for civil rights, and finally the election of a bi-racial president?
10. Do you think you have a more hopeful view of the world than Maddie did, or are you pessimistic about your future? She says, “Don’t love a spy.” Why? Could you love someone who is not what they seem? Do you know anyone who has a secret life? Did Maddie’s hunger to know her deceased sister Nancy and invent a life for her have anything to do with the way Maddie reacts to the girl who the Confederates have sent to kill her?