

The Keeper of Lost Art by Laura Morelli

1. Stella arrives at her aunt and uncle's villa feeling unwanted and out of place. How does her relationship with her aunt evolve throughout the novel? What factors contribute to this change?
2. Botticelli's *Primavera* plays a central role in the story. How does Stella's understanding and appreciation of the painting change over the course of the novel? What lessons do she and Sandro learn from it?
3. Discuss the significance of Sandro's failing eyesight in the story. How does his relationship with art differ from Stella's? What does he teach her about truly "seeing"?
4. The novel explores the theme of family—both biological and chosen. How do various characters create family bonds amid the chaos of war? What defines "family" in this story?
5. How does Stella's understanding of her father evolve throughout the story? What impact does her discovery about him have on her sense of identity?
6. The book is structured with excerpts from the diaries of Sandro Botticelli and Monuments Man Wallace Foster at the beginning of each chapter. How do these entries reflect or comment on the main narrative? What perspective do they add?
7. The villa houses not only priceless artwork but also refugees, German soldiers, and eventually Allied troops. Discuss how this microcosm reflects the larger complexities of World War II in Italy.
8. Art preservation during wartime raises ethical questions about what we value as a society. How does the novel address the tension between protecting cultural heritage and protecting human lives?
9. Explore this quote as a broader theme for *The Keeper of Lost Art*: "To Stella's astonishment, she's discovered that drawing darkness reveals light."
10. Why is it important to preserve cultural heritage—architecture, monuments, works of art, books and documents, etc.—during wartime? What do you think should be done in future conflicts to save these monuments and objects?
11. Italy experienced a dramatic shift in allegiances during World War II. How does the novel portray the impact of these shifting loyalties on ordinary Italians? How do characters navigate these complex political circumstances?
12. How do characters like Zio Tino and Zia Angela balance their responsibility to the artworks with their duty to protect their family? What impossible choices do they face?

13. How does Stella's understanding of beauty, art, and its importance evolve throughout the story? What role does art play in providing hope or comfort during war?

14. The villa's treasure room becomes a sanctuary for Stella and Sandro. What other sanctuaries or safe spaces do characters create or find in the novel?

15. Discuss *The Keeper of Lost Art* as a coming-of-age novel. How does Stella mature throughout the novel? What specific moments mark her transition from childhood to a more adult understanding of the world?

16. What message does the novel convey about the lasting power of art and beauty even in humanity's darkest hours? How might this message resonate with contemporary readers?

17. What scenes or moments in the story had the greatest impact on you and why?

Courtesy of <https://lauramorelli.com/kolabookclub/>