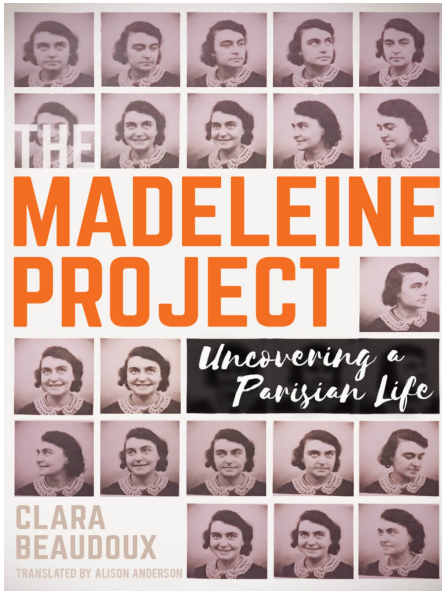


The Madeleine Project by Clara Beaudoux

A Reading Group Guide



1. Though *The Madeleine Project* is a true story, in many ways it's also a triumph of imagination – author Clara Beaudoux was curious enough to sort through all of the “stuff” left behind by a woman she'd never met, and to ask the questions that ultimately led to the book. Have you ever had a similar experience? Have you ever looked through a stranger's letters, their photo albums, knickknacks and antiques and wondered, What were their lives like?

2. Cleaning out our attics, clearing our basements of stuff that's piled up through the years – it's something we all do. Does this book make you think differently about keeping some of the things from your past that you'd usually relegate to the wastebasket?

3. If one hundred years from now a complete stranger were to go through your things the way Clara went through Madeleine's, what story do you think they'd be able to tell about you? What would you want them to know/find?

4. *The Madeleine Project* may make you uncomfortable. Don't we all have a right to our privacy? you might ask. Did this question occur to you while reading the book? How would you answer it? Do you think the author herself addresses it sufficiently?

5. How did the unique format of the book – hundreds of Tweets, including pictures and feedback from fellow Twitter users – influence the way you read it? How does the format of *The Madeleine Project* change the way you experienced the story?

6. What would *you* have done if you had been the one to discover Madeleine's storage room? Would you have tossed it out? Or would you have sorted through it, and kept certain objects while discarding the rest?

7. How do you feel about the people in Madeleine's life such as her neighbors and godson who didn't initially care to keep Madeleine's possessions? Her rich life story would have been lost had it not been for Clara's burning curiosity. Do you fault the others for not taking the initiative to save Madeleine's possessions?

8. The book's subtitle is “Uncovering a Parisian Life.” What do find particularly French about Madeleine's life (and Clara's)? How might her existence in a U.S. city have been different?

9. What are some of the things you wish Clara had been able to find out more about? What do you still want to know about Madeleine? And how do you feel about this ninety-some year old Frenchwoman

who experienced the joys and terrors of the twentieth century? Do you admire her? Pity her? Do you wish to have known her?

10. Is there one person in your life, past or present, alive or dead, whose stuff you wish you could sort through, and find answers to certain questions?