

On the Same Page – March 2022
***Chateau of Secrets* by Melanie Dobson**

Discussion Questions:

1. Did you enjoy reading *Chateau of Secrets*? Why or why not? What was your favorite part?
2. The idea of secrets is introduced early in the novel. In what ways did Gisèle's secrets protect the ones she loved? In what ways did Gisèle's secrets harm or cost the ones she loved, such as Lisette or even herself? How have you seen a secret protect or destroy?
3. Initially, Chloe is engaged to marry Austin, and she acknowledges that she has lost herself in this relationship. How do Chloe's romantic choices and consequences compare and contrast to Gisèle's, both in her refusal of Philippe and her love for Josef? How does each woman's choice affect her identity?
4. The events surrounding Gisèle's young adult life differ drastically from those that surround Chloe's. Different generations experience diverging degrees of luxuries, experiences, hardships, and upbringings that define their thresholds of "norm" and pain. How do you think someone from Gisèle's generation would view those of today's generation? How have you judged someone in an older generation? What may they have faced that you have not?
5. An eloquent comment on World War II, Gisèle says, "Hatred, it seemed, was a powerful unifier of even the greatest enemies. Hatred for the Nazis had also unified those resisting them." Love is also a powerful unifier, seen in Josef's desire to protect his mother and those who sacrificed their lives to protect Adeline. Describe how you have seen or experienced the unifying power of both hatred and love.
6. After witnessing the Jews of her town being shot to death, Gisèle thinks twice about being able to fight the Germans. "She might not be able to fight the dragon, but perhaps she could rescue this boy." How do you see Gisèle continue to "fight the dragon" against the Germans? Describe an experience in your life that despite its trauma, you continued fighting the dragons.
7. When the Germans come to live at the Château d'Epines, Gisèle asks herself, "Should she stand for all that was good and refuse them, even if it cost her life? Or should she compromise her morals to save her life—and the lives of those in her care?" What decision would you have made if you were in her shoes? Why?
8. In Chapter 30, Chloe tells her dad about finding Gisèle's marriage certificate and Adeline's birth certificate. How do you think this made him feel? Describe a time when you learned a secret that impacted or involved others.
9. Gisèle wrestles with the biblical command to "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." When was she supposed to love her enemy, and when was she supposed to resist? In the great mystery of faith, was it possible for her to do both? Do you think Gisèle did both?
10. Riley tells Chloe, "It tells a lot about a person when you find out what or who they're willing to die for." In light of this statement, how would you describe and characterize Josef?
11. Riley's grandfather tells him that "we never know what we truly believe until we are standing in a trench, surrounded by the enemy." Identify the "trenches" in Chloe's story that facilitate her discovery of who she truly is and what she believes. Were these events challenging, painful, or untroubled events? How have the "trenches" in your own life shaped you?

12. Philippe's debt drove him to make horrific decisions in order to obtain the château. How does his self-centered behavior contrast to the selfless actions of Gisèle's brother Michel?
13. Josef is a rescuer in numerous ways. At what cost to himself did he become the unlikely hero and of whom?
14. Two of Gisèle's favorite quotes were the following: "You've never lived until you've almost died," by Guy de Maupassant, and "I have learnt that all men live not by care for themselves but by love," by Leo Tolstoy. Discuss which of these quotes speaks the most to you. Why?
15. What have you learned by reading this novel?