



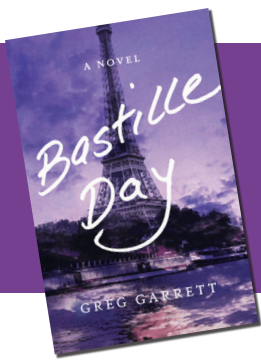
Bastille Day: A Novel

Questions for Discussion from Author Greg Garrett



1. When you encounter a novel set in Paris, what expectations do you have for it? Do certain themes or subjects seem natural in the City of Lights? Why do you think *Bastille Day* is set there? Could this story have taken place anywhere else? How is the story shaped by its setting?
2. Calvin Jones is our narrator and protagonist, and he tells us early in the story that he is here to tell us the truth. Is he a trustworthy narrator? What are his strengths and weaknesses as the teller of this story? Can you point out lines, images, or jokes that tell us something about Cal the storyteller and Cal the human being?
3. Calvin almost seems to be fleeing his girlfriend Kelly McNair, even though she is rich, beautiful, and loves a good time. Why doesn't he believe their romantic relationship can work? Do you believe they are a good fit for each other? What elements of Cal's character and past make it hard for him to love? What kind of woman would make a match for Cal?
4. Greg Garrett has made a specialty of writing about characters who have been so crushed by their pasts that they find it hard to live into their presents. As you reflect on Cal, what are the incidents that have shaped him into a person afraid to take chances? What would progress look like for his character? Does he achieve any in the course of the novel?



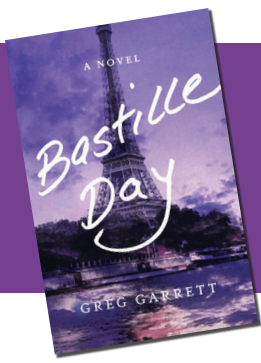


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5. What about Nadia Al-Dosari's character? Bartender Frederick tells Cal that both he and Nadia are so broken by their histories that they are afraid of the future. Do we know what has made Nadia like this? Does she grow in the course of the story? And perhaps most importantly, regardless of what you hoped for from the novel: Does Nadia's story have a satisfying ending?
6. Cal carries some bitter memories about the Middle East and Islam because of experiences there. How does the relationship between Nadia and Cal challenge him? Her? Those around them? Would it be fair to say that faith and hope are central to this story? Why or why not? What did you learn—or resonate with—about the role of faith in the lives of these characters?
7. Bastille Day is a romantic novel written by a realist, and thus, set in a real world. What contemporary issues does Bastille Day address? What personal human issues? Do you see connections between the book's individual and social themes? How might this novel be useful in convening conversation about one or more of those big topics?
8. Greg Garrett has spent many months in Paris and visited every Paris setting he writes about. Does knowing this add to your experience of the book? Are there places you have visited that come to life in these pages—or did you discover places you would like to visit someday? What and why? What did you learn about Paris or about French culture by reading Bastille Day?





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9. As part of his research, Greg Garrett interviewed people who served in or covered the Iraq War. The book often features flashbacks and remembrances of Cal's time In Country. How do the war and the events Cal lived through continue to shape him all these years later? If you had to diagnose, what seem to be some of the conditions affecting him? What sorts of assistance and advice help him as he tries to, in Uncle Jack's words, "let that go"?
10. What scenes of the book affected you most strongly? Can you say why? What characters did you most enjoy or connect with? What were the things that brought them to life for you? Are there any you would you like to spend more time with or whose stories you'd like to know better?
11. One of Bastille Day's central concerns is love and romance, and how we navigate those things in an ever-more-complicated world. What makes a love story great in your mind? Can you identify from the text (or Greg's Acknowledgements!) any of the famous love stories that might have influenced the writing of Bastille Day? Where do you think they might be at work? Does the book have a satisfying ending? Do great love stories always end happily?
12. One of Greg Garrett's goals was to write a novel that encouraged hope in its readers, since the world is a pretty hard place just now. Plenty of terrible things happen to the characters in Bastille Day, but they are also met with incredible love and grace. What are some of the scenes from the book—or wisdom from the characters—that give you hope? Is there anything Cal, Nadia, or other characters say, or any of the conclusions they reach that feel like they speak into your life? What is saving your life these days?

