

NON-FICTION BOOK CLUB

August 2019 Selection

***Indianapolis* by Lynn Vincent and Sara Vladic**

A human drama unlike any other--the riveting and definitive full story of the worst sea disaster in United States naval history.

Just after midnight on July 30, 1945, the USS Indianapolis is sailing alone in the Philippine Sea when she is sunk by two Japanese torpedoes. For the next five nights and four days, almost three hundred miles from the nearest land, nearly nine hundred men battle injuries, sharks, dehydration, insanity, and eventually each other. Only 316 will survive.

For the first time Lynn Vincent and Sara Vladic tell the complete story of the ship, her crew, and their final mission to save one of their own in "a wonderful book...that features grievous mistakes, extraordinary courage, unimaginable horror, and a cover-up...as complete an account of this tragic tale as we are likely to have" (The Christian Science Monitor). It begins in 1932, when Indianapolis is christened and continues through World War II, when the ship embarks on her final world-changing mission: delivering the core of the atomic bomb to the Pacific for the strike on Hiroshima.

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Discussion Questions:

1. What did you know or what had you heard (if anything) of U.S.S. Indianapolis before reading this book? "
2. As explained in the opening chapters of the book, the U.S.S. Indianapolis played a significant role in the U.S. Navy and its operations for years before it sank during World War II. Were you surprised by how many places it had sailed, or dignitaries it had hosted? Were you surprised by its role in the transportation of the atomic bomb? "

3. Indianapolis not only introduces us to the doomed ship, but also to the men who lived and worked on her, like Kasey Moore, John Woolson, Earl Henry, and others. Which character did you enjoy reading about most? Whose life before and after the war resonated with you most? "
4. The story of the Indianapolis disaster is not just about the American side of the war, but about the Japanese government and military's mindset as well, represented mainly through Commander Hashimoto. How important is it to include that point of view, and what does it contribute to our understanding of the event and history? "
5. Some of the most intense scenes in Indianapolis take place after the ship sinks and the surviving 900 crewmen are in the water, waiting for rescue. What moment, thought, or experience struck you most? What do you think you would do in that situation? "
6. The handling of the U.S.S. Indianapolis's sinking and the subsequent court-martial of its captain raises a lot of questions about government secrecy and operations in wartime. Do you think that their behavior and tactics were justified, given the situation and stakes? Or do you think there was another way to preserve national security without compromising individual lives?
7. Indianapolis is primarily focused on the ship's sinking and aftermath, but it also paints a vivid portrait of what was happening on the homefront before, during, and after the war, through the lives of the crew's families. How were those lives affected by the sinking and World War II as a whole? "
8. In 1996, a student named Hunter Scott became obsessed with the story of the Indianapolis and led the subsequent charge to exonerate Captain McVay. Do you think that this could have happened in McVay's lifetime, or was it necessary to have fresh eyes and opinions on the case? "
9. In addition to archival research, the authors of Indianapolis spent a lot of time interviewing the ship's surviving crew to piece the story together. What do you think each element—historical fact and personal memory—lends to the story? Is one more important than the other?
10. What roles do forgiveness, honor, and sacrifice play in the story of the Indianapolis? What are the ultimate legacies of Captain McVay and his men, and that of Commander Hashimoto? "



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- You might also enjoy *Devotion*
(<https://www.booksamillion.com/p/9780804176606>)