

In a powerful combination of both humour and heartbreak, this dazzling novel weaves little-known history, and a perfect love story, through the vast sweep of the Second World War from a modern master of storytelling.

When war is declared, Mary North leaves finishing school unfinished, goes straight to the War Office, and signs up.

Tom Shaw decides to give it a miss – until his flatmate Alistair unexpectedly enlists, and the conflict can no longer be avoided.

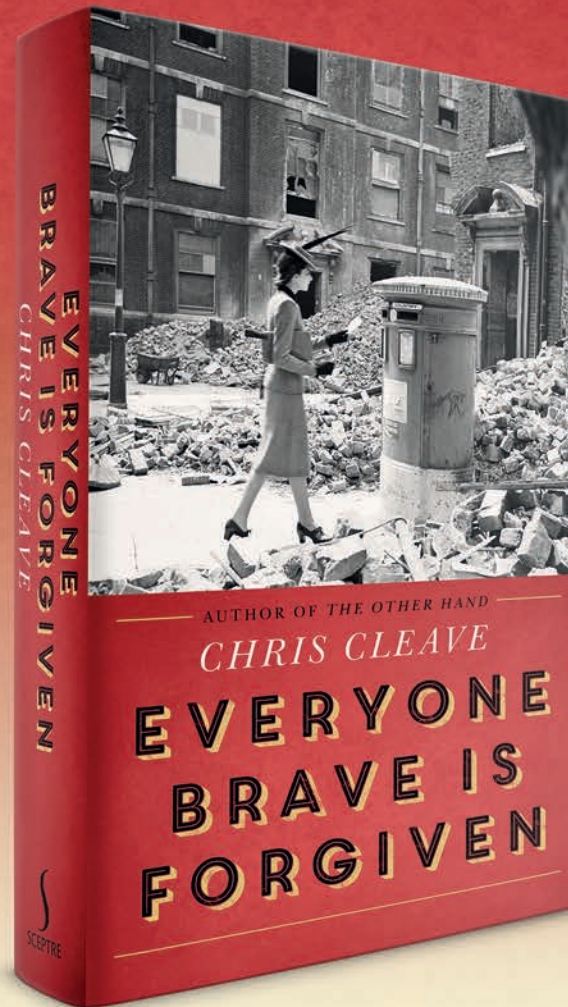
Young, bright and brave, Mary is certain she'd be a marvellous spy. When she is – bewilderingly – made a teacher, she instead finds herself defying prejudice to protect the children her country would rather forget.

Tom, meanwhile, finds that we will do anything for Mary.

And when Mary and Alistair meet, it is love, as well as war, that will test them in ways they could not have imagined, entangling three lives in violence and passion, friendship and deception, inexorably shaping their hopes and dreams.

Everyone Brave is Forgiven dares us to understand that, against the great theatre of world events, it is the intimate losses, the small battles, the daily human triumphs, that change us the most.

'Cleave cements his reputation as a skilful storyteller, and a sensitive chronicler of the interplay between the *political* and the *personal* . . . intricately researched and evocatively conveyed.' *OBSERVER*



'A *compelling* and finely crafted novel . . .

The Second World War is dangerous territory for a contemporary novelist: the enemies they face include familiarity, cliché, and the reader's knowledge that any number of things happened then that were far stranger than fiction. For a writer to succeed in setting a tale in a period of heightened emotions, they need first to keep their own emotions under close control. Ian McEwan did this with *Atonement*, Sarah Waters did it with *The Night Watch*, and Chris Cleave does it too with *Everyone Brave is Forgiven*.'

FINANCIAL TIMES

'*Tender* and *touching*' MAIL ON SUNDAY

'An *addictive*, propulsive read . . .

Cleave writes with an engaging intensity, a determination to tackle big moral issues, and a willingness to take risks.' *SUNDAY TIMES*

'Loosely based on the author's grandparents' stories, this is a *superb novel that breathes fresh life into an often brutal scenario*. Particularly astute at demonstrating how war seeps into the psyche and changes it, this is *beautifully written, funny, gut-wrenching and, above all, honest*.'

DAILY MAIL

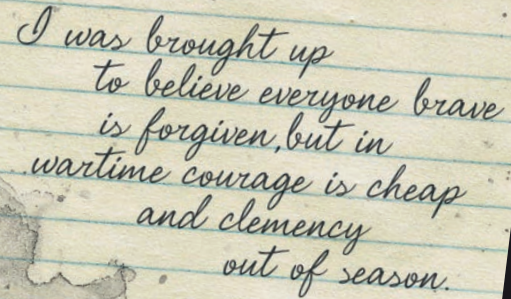
'*Absorbing* [and] sharply paced' *GUARDIAN*

'*Brilliant* [and] fearlessly written . . . Thoroughly absorbing.' *METRO*

READING GUIDE

Starting points for your discussion

These suggested questions are intended to help your reading group find interesting angles and topics for discussion about *Everyone Brave is Forgiven*. We hope that these ideas will enrich your conversation and increase your enjoyment of the book.



I was brought up to believe everyone brave is forgiven, but in wartime courage is cheap and clemency out of season.

Letters are very important in the novel.
Do you still write them? If not, why not?

'I was brought up to believe that everyone brave is forgiven, but in wartime courage is cheap and clemency out of season.'
Which character do you think shows most courage in the course of the novel?

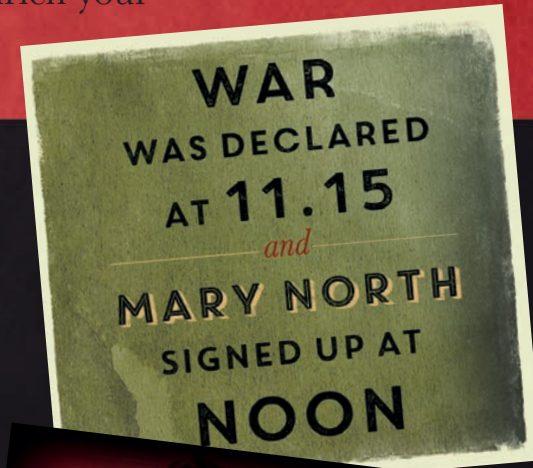
'Let us imagine, she thought, that this war will surprise us all.'
How did the novel's portrayal of war – both for soldiers and for those back home – differ from other fictional treatments of war, in both novels and films?

The author shows us a number of human relationships tested to extremes.
Think about Mary and Hilda, then Tom and Alistair, and discuss the novel's portrayal of friendship.

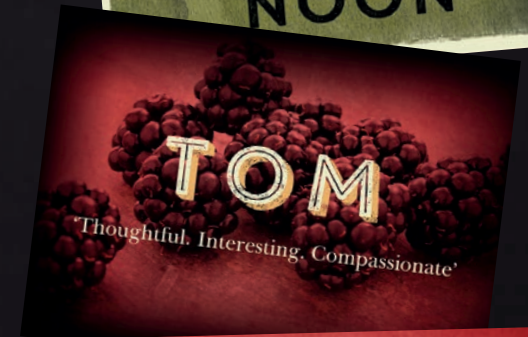
We associate the allies' wartime efforts with heroism, but the novel reveals many prejudices and intolerances. Discuss society and behaviour

'How good it would be to fall in love – how perfectly, anciently new.'
Think about young love and romance during wartime – do you imagine it was easier to fall in love, or more difficult?

Discuss the role of humour in a novel about war.



WAR
WAS DECLARED
AT 11.15
and
MARY NORTH
SIGNED UP AT
NOON



TOM
'Thoughtful. Interesting. Compassionate'



ALISTAIR
'Had the stoic's gift for shrugging off war and broken plumbing with the same easy smile'

If you visit the author's website at ChrisCleave.com you will be able to watch and listen to footage of Chris talking in more depth about the book and reading from the opening chapter.