

Reading Group Guide

Reading Group Guide: In *The Ministry of Time*, set in a near-future Britain, the narrative takes readers on a captivating journey through the eyes of the narrator, known as "the bridge," who has recently assumed a government position in a newly established ministry tasked with time-travel experiments. Despite her ambiguous role, she is assigned to monitor Commander Graham Gore, a 19th-century naval officer rescued from the ill-fated Franklin Expedition, as he adjusts to the modern world. Gore, alongside other "time-travel refugees," is brought to London, where the Ministry closely observes them while they undergo various physical and psychological exercises to help them integrate into the present. Over time, the bridge grows emotionally attached to Gore, which leads her to question the true nature of the government project and its potentially hidden intentions. This tension between personal involvement and professional duty becomes central to the unfolding mystery.

The narrative explores powerful themes of identity, memory, and belonging, using the bridge's personal history as a backdrop for a broader commentary on the human condition. The juxtaposition of the time travelers' struggles with those of the bridge's mother, a Cambodian refugee, adds a deeper layer to the exploration of displacement and adaptation. As the bridge navigates the complexities of her relationship with Gore, the story probes the ethics of time manipulation, drawing parallels between the historical trauma experienced by Gore and the contemporary challenges of navigating life in a new era. The characters' contrasting backgrounds create opportunities for introspection on how people define themselves when displaced from their origins, and how they reconcile their past with an altered present.

A series of flashbacks to Gore's past during the Franklin Expedition helps develop his character further, offering insight into his personal history while providing important context for the bridge's growing understanding of her own precarious situation. These

interludes allow the novel to delve into historical trauma, as Gore's past actions continue to shape his present, while also giving readers a window into the bridge's gradual realization of the full scale of the consequences of the time-travel project. The narrative's use of humor to break the tension contrasts with the darker themes explored, creating a unique balance between light-heartedness and the deep emotional exploration of historical legacies, personal guilt, and the complexities of tampering with time. The combination of these elements invites readers to reflect on the potential consequences of manipulating time and the often unpredictable and unsettling outcomes of such endeavors.



The story's exploration of these themes extends to the ethical questions surrounding the government project and its impact on the individuals involved. The bridge's evolving understanding of her role in the experiment and her emotional entanglement with Gore make her question her own motivations and sense of self. As readers follow this journey, they are encouraged to examine their own views on time, history, and the possibility of personal and collective redemption. The novel invites readers to consider how history shapes our identities, how we navigate the conflicts between our past and present selves, and the costs of trying to undo the mistakes of the past. With Kaliae Bradley's brilliant writing, *The Ministry of Time* becomes a profound meditation on memory, identity, and the ethical complexities of revisiting history, urging readers to reflect on the nature of time and the irreversible consequences of our choices.

Kaliae Bradley's deep dive into the realms of speculative fiction and human psychology shines through in her exploration of the consequences of time travel. Through the conversations between the bridge and Gore, and the overarching narrative surrounding the fictional government project, Bradley touches on the universal question of what it means to be human in a world that constantly changes. Her decision to use the personal histories of her characters to reflect on larger, more abstract issues such as historical guilt, the ethics of science, and the challenges of adjusting to modernity, adds significant depth to the plot. As the story unfolds, the complex relationship between Gore and the bridge forces readers to confront not only the characters' personal dilemmas but also the broader implications of changing the

course of history, making this a thought-provoking and engaging read.

