



Reading Guide:

Aristocrats: Caroline, Emily, Louisa, and Sarah Lennox, 1740-1832 by Stella Tillyard

1. In the preface, the author notes that this book would not have been possible without the vast wealth of letters found in various archives in England and Ireland. Will historians of the future have the same rich source of primary materials in this age of emails, tweets, and posts?
2. How do Caroline's early decisions as a young adult affect her throughout her life?
3. Women knew the fear of childbirth from the time of childhood. (Caroline always felt anxious after the death of two of her younger siblings.) They also knew that political marriages were not always love matches. How do the sisters support one another as they all begin new lives as wives and mothers?
4. Were you surprised by the level of candor Tillyard uses when discussing the private, personal relationships between the sisters and their husbands?
5. At one point, Sarah wrote to Emily, "I am encouraged to begin one of my monthly magazines; for I think my letters very like them, a compound of unconnected stuff and little sense par-ci, par là" (p. 87). Do you think the sisters would enjoy knowing that their private letters were used to illustrate aristocratic life of the 18th century?
6. Have you eagerly awaited correspondence from a clever letter writer to arrive at your home? When was the last time you wrote a letter of any substantial length?
7. Of all the sisters, for whom do you feel the most sympathy? Who do you believe the least sympathetic?
8. How do the Lennox sisters challenge the social norms of the 18th century?

Author Biography

Stella Tillyard is a British novelist and historian. She was educated at Oxford and Harvard universities and the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. In 1999, her bestselling book *Aristocrats* was made into a six-part series for BBC1/Masterpiece Theatre, and sold to more than 20 countries. Winner of the Meilleur Livre Etranger, the Longman/History Today Prize, and the Fawcett Prize, she taught at Harvard University; the University of California, Los Angeles; and the Centre for Editing Lives and Letters at Queen Mary, London. She is visiting professor in the department of history, classics, and archaeology, Birkbeck, University of London.

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