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**Reading Guide: *Dancing to the Precipice: The Life of Lucie de la Tour du Pin, Eyewitness to an Era* by Caroline Moorehead**

1. *Dancing to the Precipice* is full of firsthand accounts of some of the world's most extraordinary historical events in the 18th and 19th centuries. What one event that Lucie de la Tour du Pin describes do you find the most surprising?
2. What do you think of author Caroline Moorehead's sources for this biography? Do you think her transformation of memoirs and letters is accurate? Do you think she does a good job of turning that first-person information into narrative?
3. Do you think that Lucie was, as Moorehead describes her, "an impressive reporter who observed and recorded a lost age with candour and humour"? (page 4) After reading this book, would you be inclined to read the first-person sources and her memoirs?
4. What do you think it was like to live in France, England, Holland, Belgium, and the United States during such a volatile period in history? Do you think Lucie has a unique perspective on the period?
5. If you could meet three of the famous historical figures that Lucie encounters, which ones would they be, and why? Are there any famous figures in the book who you now see through a new light?
6. Do you think Lucie is extraordinary because she lived through so many historical events, displayed personal resilience in the face of tragedy, or both? Why?

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**Author Biography**

Caroline Moorehead is the author of numerous biographies and works of history. She has also written for *The Telegraph*, *The Times*, and *The Independent*. The cofounder of a legal advice center for asylum seekers from Africa, she divides her time between England and Italy.

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**Further Reading**

- *How to Ruin a Queen: Marie Antoinette and the Diamond Necklace Affair* by Jonathan Beckman (2014)  
Dive into prerevolutionary France and the trial over a 2,800-carat diamond necklace that captivated Europe in 1785.
- *England's Mistress: The Infamous Life of Emma Hamilton* by Kate Williams (2006)  
Painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds and George Romney, Lady Emma Hamilton rose from poverty to power, eventually becoming the mistress of Horatio Nelson.
- *A Scandalous Life: The Biography of Jane Digby* by Mary S. Lowell (2003)  
Author Mary S. Lowell looks at the life of the extraordinary 19th-century aristocrat Jane Digby from her diary writings.

- *Marie-Thérèse: The Fate of Marie Antoinette's Daughter* by Susan Nagel (2009)  
Susan Nagel looks at the remarkable life of a woman post-French Revolution.
- *Ambition and Desire: The Dangerous Life of Josephine Bonaparte* by Kate Williams (2014)  
Kate Williams looks at the life of Josephine, the wife of Napoleon. Her complex character, strong determination, and union with Napoleon create the picture of an unusual woman in the 18th and 19th centuries.

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