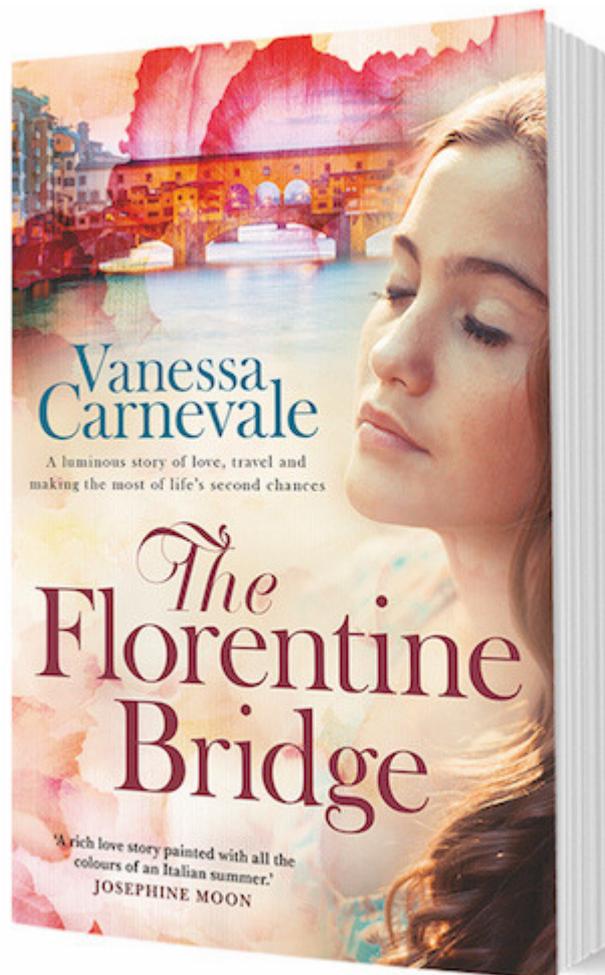


# BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION GUIDE



# BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION POINTS

1. Mia has gone through a traumatic experience. What do you think of her decision to leave her home and her old life behind her, and especially her parents who were with her through everything?
2. Do you think you might be inspired to move overseas if you were recovering from a life-threatening illness? Or would you do something differently?
3. Does Mia's relationship with her art change over the course of the novel?
4. What is your favourite description of the painting in the novel?
5. How would you react to a tragedy that directly impacts a loved one? How do you think Mia handled the aftermath of Luca's accident?
6. When Luca and Mia meet, Luca has already gone through an experience of grief and loss and come out the other side. Why do you think Luca reacts the way he does after the accident? What do you think has changed?
7. How do you think Luca and Mia change each other's perspective on life throughout the novel?
8. Have you ever been to Italy? How do you think the setting impacted the way Mia was able to overcome her fears and see life in a new way?
9. If you could move anywhere in the world to make a fresh start, where would it be?

# AUTHOR Q&A

## **1. Where did the inspiration behind THE FLORENTINE BRIDGE come from?**

When I sat down to start writing this book, I wasn't quite sure *what* I wanted to write but I did have the Italian setting in mind. In my early twenties, I lived and worked in Florence and it was around this time that I started dabbling with freelance writing and had my first article published. I started keeping notes about day to day life over there, just in case they might come in handy one day for a book. I had about ten thousand words saved and on the day I started writing *The Florentine Bridge* I called my mum and said, "You know that book I've been wanting to write for ages? I'm starting it today. Any chance you kept that file I sent you?" Within half an hour she sent me the document. Reading through it brought back a lot of memories about life in Italy. From there, Mia's character came to me, along with her backstory, and away I went.

## **2. What was the hardest part of writing the book?**

The hardest scenes to write were the flashback scenes with Mia and her parents. Not only did I have to tap into what it might have been like for Mia to be going through what she did, but I'm a mother, and having to go to that place of putting myself in Julie and Adam's shoes to imagine what it must have been like to be afraid of losing your daughter, of not knowing the outcome, was uncomfortable as a writer. I cried myself through those scenes.

# AUTHOR Q&A

**3. Without spoiling the story for anyone who hasn't read it, can you tell us why you chose not to give Luca a full recovery? It's what we were all hoping for!**

I rewrote the ending for *The Florentine Bridge* three times. Ultimately, I think the book had to end in the way that it did to really bring home that notion of accepting life and what it throws at us no matter what while reaffirming that strong sense of timeless love.

**4. What type of research did you need to conduct for *The Florentine Bridge*?**

I had lived in Florence for several years, so knew the setting intimately, but I still researched some of the landmarks mentioned in the book. I also did some research into renaissance art, and on a more practical level, I spent some considerable time playing with watercolour. I can't call myself an artist but I did want to capture the feelings associated with creating art, and the way our emotions can affect our creative work.

**5. Many first-time writers find it hard to stay motivated during the writing of a first draft. What advice would you give to an aspiring writer struggling to finish their novel?**

Let yourself be led by your curiosity to find out what happens next. I know it can be hard to envisage a completed manuscript, especially when the word count is on the slim side and you feel like there's SO MUCH WORK ahead. It's normal to have doubts, but keep in mind that if you keep showing up, you will end up with a finished draft and no matter how much work it needs after that, you will be able to polish it to get it to where it needs to be. It might take some writers longer than others, but that's okay—just keep showing up and giving it your all and you'll reach 'The End' eventually.

# BOOK CLUB VISITS

If you would like me to attend your book club either in person (I'll bring wine!) or via Skype you can get in touch with me here: [vanessa@vanessacarnevale.com](mailto:vanessa@vanessacarnevale.com)

## LET'S CONNECT

For news and updates sign up for my monthly newsletter at [www.vanessacarnevale.com](http://www.vanessacarnevale.com)

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