



**Book:** *Code Name Helene*

**Author:** Ariel Lawhon

**Date:** Monday, December 12, 2022

**Time:** 8:00pm ET

**Facilitator:** Emily Muñoz

**Summary:** This is a historical fiction novel based on the life of Australian-born World War II heroine [Nancy Grace Augusta Wake](#). Nancy, who was given multiple code names in her roles in the French Resistance and later in the Special Operations Executive during World War II, started out as a nurse and journalist and became a staggeringly effective operative and leader in the French resistance.

This meticulously researched story is told in interweaving timelines organized around the four code names Nancy used during the war. Code Name Hélène is a captivating and moving story of enduring love, remarkable sacrifice and unfaltering resolve that chronicles the true exploits of a woman whose courage helped change the course of history.

We first find Nancy Wake in 1936, an intrepid Australian expat living in Paris who has bluffed her way into a reporting job for a Hearst newspaper. It is here she meets the wealthy French industrialist Henri Fiocca. But more than Nancy's fierce independence is at stake - following the first reimagination of herself as Mrs. Fiocca, the Germans invade France, and she takes yet another name: a code name.

As Lucienne Carlier, Nancy smuggles people and documents across the border. Her success and her remarkable ability to evade capture earns her the nickname "The White Mouse" from the Gestapo. With a five million franc bounty on her head, Nancy is forced to escape France and leave Henri behind. When she enters training with the Special Operations Executives in Britain, her new comrades are instructed to call her Hélène. And finally, with mission in hand, Nancy is airdropped back into France as the deadly Madam Andre, where she claims her place as one of the most powerful leaders in the French Resistance, armed with a ferocious wit, her signature red lipstick, and the ability to summon weapons straight from the Allied Forces.

But no one can protect Nancy if the enemy finds out these four women are one and the same, and the closer to liberation France gets, the more exposed she--and the people she loves--become.

**Things to Consider:** This book is based in the midst of World War II. As such, it deals not only with the operational realities of the war in Europe, but the emotional ones as well.