

An Infamous Army

By Georgette Heyer

About the Author

Georgette Heyer's historical novels have charmed and delighted millions of readers. She wrote over 50 books, including Regency romances, mysteries and historical fiction. She was known as the Queen of Regency romance, and was legendary for her research, historical accuracy and her extraordinary plots and characterizations.

Reading Group Guide

1. The Prince of Orange is initially given command of the army that is to fight Napoleon despite the fact that he is young and seems, most of the time, to be utterly oblivious to the actual situation and the amounts of diplomacy needed to command such a mixed band. Why is the Prince given this command?
2. The Duke of Wellington appears to like all of his *aides-de-camp* to be young, energetic men, encouraging them to dance and be social, rather than reprimand them for this behavior. As a person in command, what sort of people would you want to surround yourself with to assist you?
3. We get to see the Duke through Lady Worth's eyes. She first believes him to be a demi-god from his reputation, then cross and querulous from Colonel Audley's description, then a bit stupid from his behavior at various balls. Do you think the Duke intentionally courts these different impressions? What purpose would that serve?
4. After Barbara accepts Charles' proposal of marriage, she soon tries to get him to marry her immediately, before she changes her mind, but Charles refuses. Was this a good decision? What problems would have been avoided if they married immediately? What other problems would have arisen?
5. Everyone struggles greatly with Barbara's behavior, including Barbara herself. She is a flirt and enjoys the attention she gets from men and from scandal. How would you deal with such a "wild child" if she were your daughter? Your niece? Your friend?
6. Barbara says of Charles, "I can't particularize him. I can't say, he is handsome, he is witty, or he is clever. I can only say, he is Charles." Lavissee responds with surprise at her response, saying that she is actually serious about Charles. Do you agree with Lavissee? Was Barbara always serious about Charles, though her behavior sometimes said otherwise? Or did it take his going off to war to make her realize her true feelings?
7. We begin to see rather early on that there is something between Lucy Devenish and George Altair but we do not find out until much later that Lucy and George had married. Would you have believed Lucy capable of such a deception from what we know of her? What did you first think was going on between Lucy and George?

8. The situation with Barbara and Peregrine causes many problems in Lady Worth's family. Where do you believe the blame lies? With Peregrine for being young and easily distracted? Harriet for her behavior? Or Barbara for knowingly using her charms to draw Peregrine away from Harriet?
9. Barbara's flirtations with Peregrine are the catalyst that ends Barbara and Charles' engagement. Who do you believe was correct in their argument? Is there a way that Charles could have handled the situation that would not have ended in a broken engagement? If so, should he have?
10. Upon learning of Lord Vidal's departure from Brussels, the Earl of Worth invites Barbara to stay with himself and his wife. Judith is at first horrified by this arrangement, but comes to care for Barbara. Would you have been able to allow the woman who jilted a member of your family to live in your house? What does this say about Judith's character?
11. Judith tells her husband that she was surprised at Barbara's strength of spirit and that she did so much to help the wounded, and her husband tells her that he was not surprised in the least. Who do you agree with? Would you have thought that Barbara could be so selfless? What would you have done in a similar situation?
12. When some of the Duke of Wellington's officers tell him that Napoleon is within range of their guns, the Duke replies, "No, no, I won't have it! It is not the business of general officers to be firing upon each other!" Do you agree with the Duke's scruples? How is this different from modern warfare? Why is it different?
13. When Charles is initially wounded by shrapnel when carrying messages, he refuses medical care and continues on, only to be much more severely wounded later. Do you respect his actions or think that he was foolish? What would you have done?
14. After being injured Charles wakes up in the Worth residence and sees Barbara. "Why Bab! You've come back to me!" to which she replies, "*You* have come back to *me*, Charles. I shall never let you go again." If you were Charles, would you have taken Barbara back? Why or why not?
15. When Judith attempts to congratulate the Duke of Wellington on his victory at Waterloo he says, "Oh, do not congratulate me! I have lost all of my dearest friends!" How does that fit with what we already know of Wellington? Because he is so often portrayed as such a brilliant general, do you think that his humanity is lost in other accounts?