

THE
TRAILBLAZING
JOURNALIST
WHO CAPTURED
ELEANOR
ROOSEVELT'S
HEART



HICK

SARAH MILLER

Discussion Guide

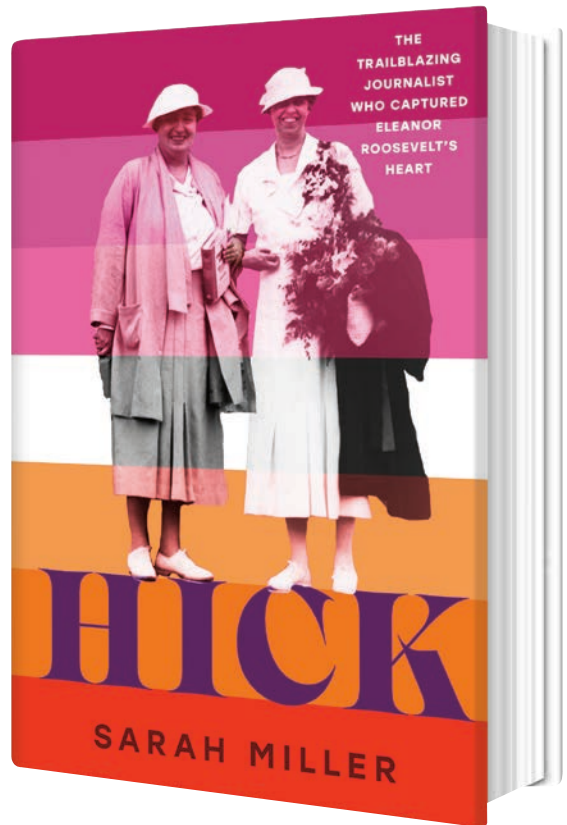
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ABOUT THE BOOK

Lorena Hickok came from nothing. She was on her own from the age of fourteen, cooking and scrubbing for one family after another as she struggled to finish school. But the girl who secretly longed for affection discovered she had a talent with words.

That talent allowed Hick to carve out a place for herself in the male-dominated newsrooms of the Midwest, where she earned bylines on everything from football to opera to politics. By age thirty-five, she'd become one of the Associated Press's top reporters.

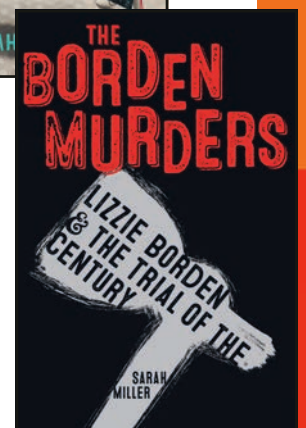
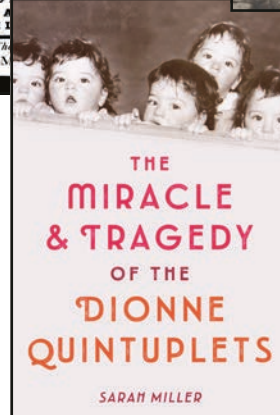
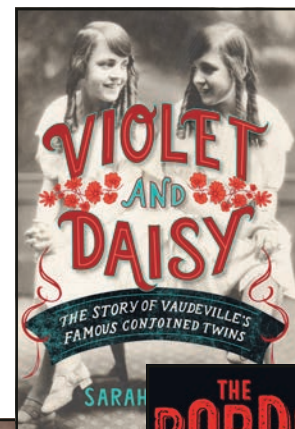
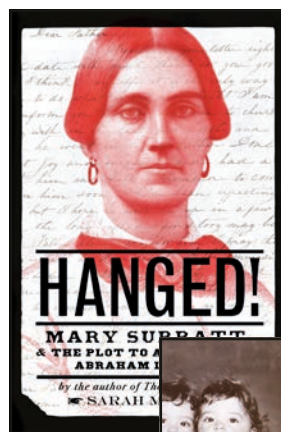
At the moment her career was taking off, Hick was assigned to cover Eleanor Roosevelt during FDR's presidential campaign. By the close of 1932, Hick was head over heels in love with the wife of the president-elect. And her life would never be the same.



★ **“This immersive, engaging, and deeply emotional portrait of an unconventional woman is a must-read for enthusiasts of women’s history, journalism, and LGBTQIA+ biographies.”** –*School Library Journal*, starred review

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

SARAH MILLER is the author of *Hanged!*, which was called a “tour de force” in a *Booklist* starred review; *Violet and Daisy*, which was called “meticulously detailed” in a starred review from *The Horn Book*; *The Miracle & Tragedy of the Dionne Quintuplets*, which received four starred reviews; and *The Borden Murders*, a *School Library Journal* Best Book and an ALA-YALSA Quick Pick for Reluctant Readers. In addition to her work for young readers, she is the author of the *USA Today* bestselling *Caroline: Little House, Revisited*, which was named a Barnes & Noble Discover Great New Writers selection, among other accolades.



PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Based on the title and subtitle of this book, what do you expect this story to be about?
2. Lorena Hickok was born in 1893 in rural Wisconsin. Based on your existing knowledge, or after some research, how would you describe the culture and society she was born into? What were the predominating attitudes toward women and gender?
3. Briefly review the Sources section (p. 345). What do you notice about the sources the author used to inform her story?
4. Why was this book written now? What draws today's readers to the story of Lorena Hickok? Consider what has changed since the events it relays.
5. What personal assumptions, feelings, or questions are you bringing to this book?
6. What is the author communicating by breaking the story into four parts: Lorena, Hick, Hick & Eleanor, and Alone?



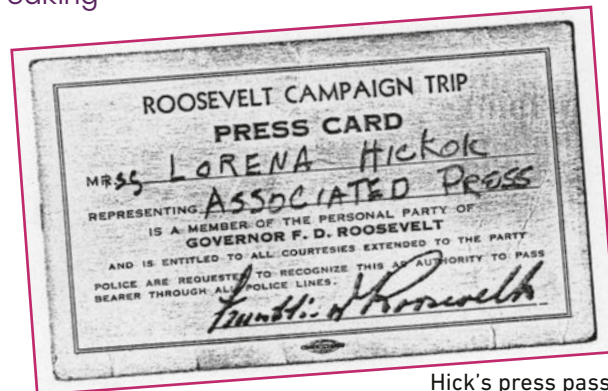
Hick in the 1930s, at the height of her career with the Associated Press. This image stands on the mantel in Eleanor's living room at Val-Kill to this day.

National Park Service



Hick on her thirty-third birthday, about to climb aboard Old Lady 501 for "a roaring, swaggering, joyous adventure" in the steam locomotive.

Hennepin County Library Special Collection



Hick's press pass from the 1932 Roosevelt presidential campaign. "Miss" is handwritten over the preprinted "Mr."

Courtesy of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, Hyde Park, New York



Lorena and her roommate, Ellie Morse, rush to catch the elevator in this 1920 illustration from one of Lorena's Girl Reporter features.

Courtesy of the author

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does Hickok's ethical dilemma in the prologue set the stage for the rest of the book?
2. What aspects of Hickok's early years shaped her strengths and weaknesses as a reporter, friend, and person?
3. From a young age, Hickok determined that something was wrong with her by misinterpreting her unhealthy family dynamics as her "fault." Who were the many people in Hickok's life that helped her realize she mattered, and how did they do so? Who has positively impacted your life?
4. How did Hickok and Eleanor Roosevelt affect one another personally and professionally?
5. Hickok and Eleanor Roosevelt experienced conflict in their relationship and, for the most part, lived very different lives. What connection and values did they share that enabled them to develop and maintain a strong relationship?
6. How and why does Hickok and Eleanor Roosevelt's relationship change over time? How have your relationships changed over time, or how might they change?
7. This story, particularly the intimate details, is pulled from the long letters Hick and Eleanor wrote to each other their whole adult lives. What kind of story might be written about you based on the messages between you and your friends?
8. How did Hickok and Eleanor Roosevelt's relationship affect American and world politics, and the field of journalism? How do your relationships affect the world around you?
9. How did Hickok's socioeconomic status as a single woman impact her finances and therefore the life choices available to her in the first half of the 1900s?
10. When Hickok lived in Minneapolis with Ellie, homosexual acts were a crime. When the Lorena Hickok Papers were opened in 1978, the reporter who discovered them tried to reseal or remove them to "protect" Eleanor Roosevelt's legacy. What has happened since then that allows this book to be written and published in mainstream media now?
11. In the Author's Note, the author describes her experience reading the Hickok-Roosevelt correspondence and how she chose to handle the implicit bias all readers bring to primary sources. How did her choice to primarily attribute emotions through quotations impact the writing? How did it affect the story?
12. The author states, "The precise nature of Hickok and Roosevelt's relationship is still debated today." How do you interpret their relationship? How does the nature of their relationship matter to history?

Erica Lobel has her bachelor of arts in English literature from Carleton College and master of social work from Boston College. She is a child and family therapist in New Hampshire.



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