

## The Radium Girls by Kate Moore

### Author Bio:

Kate Moore is the author of *The Radium Girls: The Dark Story of America's Shining Women* (UK title, *The Radium Girls: They Paid with Their Lives. Their Final Fight Was for Justice*).

Prior to becoming a writer, Moore worked for 12 years in publishing, as an editorial director for Penguin Random House. In 2014 she turned to freelance—ghostwriting memoir, biography, and history.

It was in 2015, while directing a London version of the play, *These Shining Lives*, the story of women in Ottawa, Canada, who worked with radium, that Moore realized no account of the tragedy existed from the perspective of the women. That led her to conduct her own research and eventually write *The Radium Girls*. (Adapted from the publisher and Goodreads.)

### Discussion Questions:

1. Trace the emotional trajectory of the women who worked with radium paint—from their initial excitement about their jobs to their realization that it was killing them.
2. What do you find most horrifying about the suffering the women endured as their health deteriorated? Was this too difficult to read? Or did you get through it?
3. Talk about the response of the United States Radium Corporation to the women's complaints—how much did it truly understand about the hazards of radium? What arguments did the company enlist against the health claims of the women?
4. What most outraged you about the treatment the women received? The dentist who approached the company for hush money, for instance? What else?
5. To what extent do today's laws offer workers protection against hazardous materials and other dangers in the workplace? Consider OSHA, for instance. How far have we come? What relevance does this story have in the 21st century?

(Questions by LitLovers.)

### Reviews:

*Radium Girls* spares us nothing of their suffering; though at times the foreshadowing reads more like a true-crime story, Moore is intent on making the reader viscerally understand the pain in which these young women were living, and through which they had to fight in order to get their problems recognized....The story of real women at the mercy of businesses who see them only as a potential risk to the bottom line is haunting precisely because of how little has changed; the glowing ghosts of the radium girls haunt us still.

**NPR Books**

A perfect blend of the historical, the scientific, and the personal, this richly detailed book sheds a whole new light on this unique element and the role it played in changing workers' rights. *The Radium Girls* makes it impossible for you to ignore these women's incredible stories, and proves why, now more than ever, we can't afford to ignore science, either.

**Bustle**

In giving voice to so many victims, Moore overburdens the story line...[yet she] details what was a "ground-breaking...accomplishment" for worker's rights.... [A]n emotionally charged...long, sad book.

**Publishers Weekly**

(Starred review.) Moore's well-researched narrative is written with clarity and a sympathetic voice that brings these figures and their struggles to life...a must-read for anyone interested in American and women's history, as well as topics of law, health, and industrial safety.

***Library Journal***

(Starred review.) This timely book celebrates the strength of a group of women, whose determination to fight improved both labor laws and scientific knowledge of radium poisoning. Written in a highly readable, narrative style, Moore's chronicle of these inspirational women's lives is sure to provoke discussion-and outrage-in book groups.

***Booklist***

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***Kirkus Reviews***