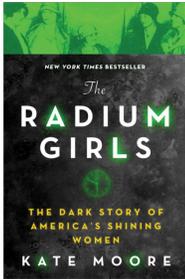


# Books by the Stack



## ***Radium Girls: The Dark Story of America's Shining Women* by Kate Moore**

The story of hundreds of young, vibrant women who were sentenced to death by their employers. The so-called “Radium Girls” painted luminescent faces on clock and watch dials using a paint mixture that contained radium. When the effects of radium led to horrific disfigurement and pain, the company refused to take responsibility.

**Why you'll like it:** Dramatic. Haunting. Compelling.

**About the Author:** Kate Moore is a New York Times bestselling author who writes across many genres, including biography, memoir, and history. She was also the director of the acclaimed play about the Radium Girls called 'These Shining Lives'. (Bowker Author Biography)

### **Questions for Discussion**

1. *The Radium Girls* is filled with both triumph and tragedy. Which part of the story affected you the most and why? Was it their initial excitement about their jobs? Or was it the realization that their jobs were killing them?
2. Is there a figure in *The Radium Girls* that resonates more strongly with you than others? If so, what part of their story or character stood out?
3. Even after radium was proved poisonous, and the illness verified as work-related, the radium companies stood fast by their convictions. Why do you believe they were so resilient, and can you imagine modern companies behaving with such similar ruthlessness?
4. 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?
5. How do you believe the radium companies, and the press, would have reacted differently to the scandal had the workers been male? Considering the time time period, how did their gender help and hinder their case?
6. Did the United States Radium Corporation truly understand about the hazards of radium? What arguments did the company enlist against the health claims of the women?
7. What most outraged you about the treatment the women received? The dentist who approached the company for hush money, for instance? What else?
8. How do you think today's world would be different had *the Radium Girls* not fought back against the radium companies? To what extent today's laws offers workers protections 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 21<sup>st</sup> Century?
9. It takes over 1,500 years for the effects of radium to wear off. This means tat the bodies of women and parts of the towns in which they worked remain poisonous to this day. Despite the harrowing implications,

why do you feel this story hasn't been widely explored?

**10.** *The Radium Girls* is told mostly through the eyes of the radium-dial workers, their families, and friends; however, previous research never focused on their personal journeys. How did it change your appreciation of or engagement with the story to know the smaller, personal details of the girls' lives? Is there another historical event where you've noticed women being pushed to the sidelines?

**11.** Although radium can be seen as an evil entity in the book, it's also been used for the greater good. Explore how radium has changed the world in a positive way. Do you feel it was worth the sacrifice?

**12.** Besides radium, what other world-altering discoveries can you think of that both led to advancement, and also tragedy?

**13.** How were you inspired by the strength of the "shining girls", and how can you carry that onwards to incite change in your own life?

*(Questions from the Sourcebooks and Litlovers)*



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