# The Love That I Have by James Maloney

## Synopsis

Margot Baumann has left school to take up her sister’s job in the mailroom of a large prison. But this is Germany in 1944, and the prison is Sachsenhausen concentration camp near Berlin. Margot is shielded from the camp’s brutality as she has no contact with prisoners.

But she does handle their mail and, when given a cigarette lighter and told to burn the letters, she is horrified by the callous act she must carry out with her own hands. This is especially painful since her brother was taken prisoner at Stalingrad and her family have had no letters from him. So Margot steals a few letters, intending to send them in secret, only to find herself drawn to their heart-rending words of hope, of despair, and of love.

This is how Margot comes to know Dieter Kleinschmidt – through the beauty and the passion of his letters to a girlfriend. And since the girlfriend is also named Margot, it is like reading love letters written for her.

## Discussion questions

1. Was it justifiable for Margot to write to Dieter as if she were the Margot from his letters? Explore her reasons for doing so and consider if you could ever do something like this.
2. As Margot’s awareness grows, her relationship with her mother becomes strained. Discuss how they both reacted to the situation they found themselves in.
3. Margot and Dieter never discussed their history with their children. Why do you think this was? Would you do the same?
4. What can we learn from this novel that informs our own actions in the present day?
5. How does reading and writing improve empathy?
6. How might the novel have been different if it was written entirely in letters?

*Discussion questions from https://www.harpercollins.com.au/9781460754634/the-love-that-i-have/*