



Book Club in a Bag

Discussion Questions

“The Nightingale” by Kristin Hannah

1. “The Nightingale” opens with an intriguing statement that lays out one of the major themes of the book: “If I have learned anything in this long life of mine, it is this: In love we find out who we want to be; in war we find out who we are.” What do you think the narrator means by this? Is love the ideal and war the reality? How does war change the way these characters love? How does love influence their actions in the war?
2. Take a moment to talk about the narrative structure of “The Nightingale”. Why do you think Kristin Hannah chose to keep the narrator’s identity a secret in the beginning and end of the novel? Were you surprised by who it turned out to be?
3. Many characters chose to construct a secret identity in “The Nightingale”. How did pretending to be someone else determine each character’s fate, for better or worse? And what about those who had no choice, like Ari and Julien?
4. The sisters, Isabelle and Vianne, respond to the war in very different ways. Isabelle reacts with anger and defiance, risking her life to join the resistance against Nazi occupation. Vianne proceeds with caution and fear, avoiding conflicts for the sake of her children. Who do you admire—or relate to, or sympathize with—more, Vianne or Isabelle? Discuss your reasons.
5. Perhaps one of the most chilling moments in the book is when Vianne provides Captain Beck with a list: Jews. Communists. Homosexuals. Freemasons. Jehovah’s Witnesses. We know now how wrong it was to provide this list, but can you understand why Vianne did it? What do you think you would have done?
6. Take a moment to talk about Beck. Is he a sympathetic character? Did you believe he was a good man, or was he just trying to seduce Vianne. Did he deserve his fate?
7. Discuss the scene in which Ari is taken away. What do you believe is the right answer in this situation—if there is one? What would you have done in Vianne’s position?
8. Do you think Julien had a right to know who his real father was? Would you have made the same decision Vianne did?

The above questions are taken from Hannah, K. (2016). *The Nightingale*: discussion questions. <http://kristinhannah.com/books/the-nightingale/book-clubs/>

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