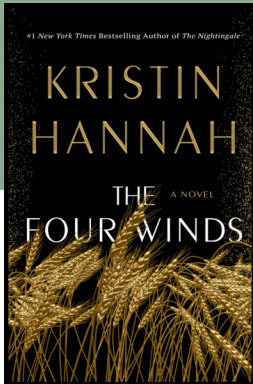


COVER TO COVER

The Four Winds



by

Kristin Hannah

BOOK CLUB

# Discussion Questions

April 16  
6:30 p.m.

- 1 "Hope is a coin I carry. . . . There were times in my journey when it felt as if that penny and the hope it represented were the only things that kept me going." What is the significance of the fact that it is an American penny? In what ways does hope anchor us in the moment, and in what ways does it push us forward? Do you or your family have any keepsakes that represent your family's hope for the future?
- 2 "But we women of the Great Plains worked from sunup to sundown, too, toiled on wheat farms until we were as dry and baked as the land we loved." The stories of women have largely gone

undocumented throughout history, and this era is no different. It is changing, slowly, and women's courage and determination and victories are being brought to light. How are women's stories different? Why do you think they've gone unreported for so long? Do you think sharing these stories will make a difference to future generations?

- 3 Life was very different for unmarried young women in earlier generations. Expectations for their future were sharply defined. How is Elsa shaped by these expectations and her failure to meet them? Do you think it would have been the same for her in New York City? Did you feel compressed by expectation when you were growing up? Do you think these societal mores were designed to keep women "in their place"? How difficult is it to defy both family and society in a small town?
- 4 "She had to believe there was grit in her, even if it had never been tested or revealed." This sentence highlights Elsa's essentially hopeful nature, even though she doesn't believe in herself. Her family and her world have pared her down to inconsequence. Does this idea resonate with you? Have you seen it at work in other people? In yourself?
- 5 In 1920s America, there was significant prejudice against Italians; we see that prejudice in Elsa's own family. What does Rafe represent to Elsa on the night they meet? Is it simply sex and loneliness? Or do you think there's something deeper involved? Another small defiance against her parents' small-mindedness? What does it say about Elsa that she went with Rafe so willingly?
- 6 In 1920s America, there was significant prejudice against Italians; we see that prejudice in Elsa's own family. What does Rafe represent to Elsa on the night they meet? Is it simply sex and loneliness? Or do you think there's something deeper involved? Another small defiance against her parents' small-mindedness? What does it say about Elsa that she went with Rafe so willingly?
- 7 Motherhood changes Elsa in almost every way. What does she learn by becoming a mother? What does she learn about motherhood from Rose? How does motherhood strengthen a woman? How does it weaken her? How does Elsa remain "herself" after giving birth? How does she change?

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- ⑧ There is a strong thread running through this novel about man's connection to the land. During the Dust Bowl, while many families went west in search of work and a better life, most of them stayed behind on their parched farms. Why do you think that is?
- ⑨ Why does Rafe leave and what is he chasing out west? Do you have sympathy for how broken he felt by the poverty and hardship? Should Elsa have agreed to go with him? How does Elsa aim to fill his void, and why does she believe she loves him even after the abandonment?
- ⑩ They say that those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Americans were faced

with many of the same challenges of the Great Depression. Did we learn from previous generations? What differences can you see in the two difficult times? What similarities? How do you think future generations will judge the America of today?

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