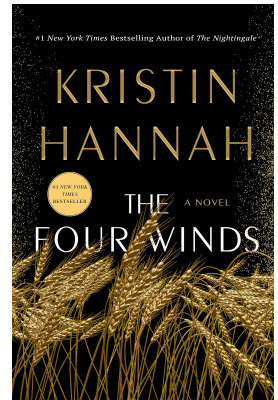


Skaneateles Library
Books by the Stack
Discussion Questions

The Four Winds

By Kristin Hannah



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.” (pg.1) Do you or your family have any keepsakes that represent your family's hope for the future?
2. Life was very different for unmarried young women in earlier generations. Expectations for their future were sharply defined. 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”?
3. “She wished she'd never read *The Age of Innocence*. What good came from all this unexpressed longing? She would never fall in love, never have a child of her own.” (Pg. 8). Did you identify with Elsa and her journey throughout this book? What books influenced you when you were growing up?
4. Motherhood changes Elsa in almost every way. What does she learn by becoming a mother? What does she learn about motherhood from Rose?
5. How would you describe the Texas landscape the author paints? With its dust storms and earth dry and zigzag cracked, is it like any you've known?
6. 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?
7. How have the Dust Bowl and “going West” been treated by the American imagination? What has been glamorized, and what grittiness has been left out or effectively captured?
8. Life in California is not at all what the migrants expected, what advertisements had led them to believe. The locals treat them badly and are afraid of them. How does the treatment of migrants in California during the Great Depression mirror the treatment of immigrants today? How is it similar or different?
9. In the 1930s, communism and socialism were on the rise, partially in response to the grinding poverty, joblessness, and despair. The Communists claimed that

*Discussion questions adopted from Kristin Hannah's Discussion Guide

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- "communism is the new Americanism". Can you understand why people believed in that? What do we know now that people didn't know then?
10. Which characters in the book did you like best? Did the characters seem believable to you?
 11. How does the Great Depression setting of *The Four Winds* compare to America during the pandemic? What lessons of resilience and healing might be embedded in this story? How might others' struggles inspire us?
 12. "Courage is fear you ignore." How do Elsa's and Loreda's actions embody this idea?
 13. Did you find the end of Elsa's and her family's journey satisfying? How do you see Loreda's life being like her mother's? How will it be different?
 14. If you've read any other Kristin Hannah books, how does this one compare?