

Book Club questions: Kristin Hannah's *The Women*

**Disclaimer: these questions contain spoilers.**

1. "Women can be heroes." Frankie believes her future as a wife and mother is set in stone until Rye says this. It is a small comment that tears a big hole in Frankie's perception of the world. These words, and her brother's enlistment, inspire Frankie to join the Army Nurse Corps. Why do you think Frankie's parents were so appalled by her enlistment in the Army? Was it simply her sex, or was there more to it? How do you think Bette and Connor's own family history of service influenced their opinion of her choice?
2. Frankie arrives in Vietnam filled with idealism and hope. She wants to "make a difference." But almost instantly she thinks that she is too inexperienced and that she has made a mistake. It is Ethel who talks her through this and gives her comfort. How does this friendship change and grow over time? How do Ethel and Barb change Frankie's view of the world?
3. During her service, Frankie is aware of the protests going on "back in the world". Even so, when she returns home after two tours in Vietnam, she is stunned by the lack of welcome she receives. She realizes quickly that Vietnam veterans are not respected; there is no thank-you for their service. The only way to survive is to "disappear" into the landscape and not talk about the war. What would it feel like to have served your country in wartime only to be spat on when you came home? How did this treatment affect Frankie?
4. Explore and discuss the theme of honour in the novel as it relates to Frankie's decisions about the war, her life after the war, and Jamie and Rye. What is her moral code? Other nurses tell Frankie that in Vietnam, "men lie and they die." How does this statement reflect the events of the novel?

5. Clearly, Frankie suffers from PTSD after the war. At that time, there was very little understanding of the effects of PTSD, and both the military and the medical community dismissed the notion that a woman could suffer from the effects of war. Frankie herself believes that she “wasn’t in combat.” Was she? How do you define being in combat?
6. About her time at war and her understanding of it, Frankie writes: “It’s hard to see clearly when the world is angry and divided and you’re being lied to.” This sentiment applies to many eras throughout human history, including our own. Why do you think the world is so polarized now? How much difference does truth make, and consensus, and community? How can individuals make a difference?
7. What do you think was Frankie’s darkest moment in the book? What should Frankie have done when she learned that Rye was alive? Did you see his betrayal coming? Should Frankie have seen it? Were there any clues that she missed?
8. Do you believe Rye loved Frankie?
9. In the novel, Frankie goes from sheltered California girl to hardened combat veteran to woman at peace with herself and the world. Her peace is hard-won and continually fought for. What do you think healed her? How did you feel about Frankie at the end of the novel? What do you think the rest of her life looks like?
10. At the end of the book, Frankie realizes that “remembrance mattered.” What does she mean by this?