

Journeying Home

by Emily Saxe Nydam



About the Book

?Readers will be enthralled.... Touching tribute to resilience and tenacity, spanning generations of women.?

? BookLife/Publishers Weekly

?An effortless read... an absorbing family drama??

? IndieReader Review

?Readers of Kristin Hannah will feel at home? a book to savor and cherish!?

? NetGalley Review

Can missed connections and tragic loss in one generation be redeemed in the next? Can an ordinary house hold the key to that redemption?

JOURNEYING HOME is a sweeping, dual-timeline love story that begins in the early 1900s and unfolds across generations. It follows two strong women, Lizzy and Gwen, whose lives are separated by time yet deeply intertwined.

In rural Virginia, Lizzy is determined to escape poverty and abuse. Resourceful and resilient, she becomes a nurse and travels to a field hospital in France during World War I. Though fiercely independent, Lizzy is also a romantic at heart. When she meets a charismatic American soldier, their relationship challenges everything she believes about love, duty and the life she has worked so hard to create for herself.

In the present day, Gwen is navigating a difficult divorce and searching for a way forward. Drawn by a keepsake box left to her by her great-aunt Lizzy, she travels to Richmond, where she discovers Lizzy's old rowhouse and begins to uncover long-buried family secrets. As Gwen pieces together Lizzy's past, she finds herself rebuilding her own life in unexpected ways.

Spanning continents and generations, JOURNEYING HOME explores love, loss, resilience and the enduring power of connection --- revealing how the past shapes the present and how healing can echo across time.

Discussion Guide

Questions for Discussion

1. Lizzy's childhood was incredibly difficult. Besides extreme poverty, she also had the great misfortune of an abusive father who only brought fear and control instead of comfort or security. How do you believe this upbringing impacted Lizzy in adulthood, given Lizzy's position in the family as the eldest child?
2. When an adult truly sees a child and encourages them, it can have an extraordinary impact on the rest of their life. Mr. Johnny's kindness in giving Lizzy magazines not only provides her with an escape but also directly leads her to start journaling, and Mrs. Jensen's belief and support directly lead to her becoming a nurse. When you think back to your childhood, how did the adults in your life impact your interests or beliefs about yourself?
3. Leaving home plays a significant role in the self-discovery of both women. For Lizzy, it's leaving the small Virginia farm she grew up on and then leaving the U.S. to join the war effort in France. In Gwen's case, it's leaving her marital home after her divorce to reconnect with her great aunt's legacy. Thinking on your own life so far, how has venturing away from the familiar led to growth?
4. Cardinals are often believed to have a spiritual meaning, symbolizing loved ones who have passed. How does this meaning influence how you interpret their presence throughout the story? Who could these birds symbolize for both Gwen and Lizzy?
5. Lizzy's sister, Addie, mistakenly says "journeying" instead of "journaling," but Lizzy considers the term apt, and it sticks. Why do you think journeying felt like an appropriate way to refer to all her writings in her journal?
6. "Such a shame, to be forgotten." These are the sentiments the librarian expresses when Gwen requests to view her great aunt's collections in Richmond. Gwen feels that to be forgotten is "even worse than death." What are your thoughts on legacy? Do you have worries or any strong thoughts on being remembered after death? How have these beliefs impacted how you live your life?
7. Lizzy abandons the relationship that has grown with Lieutenant Flynn when she learns he's the man her best friend is in love with. Would you have made the same decision? What weight do you give romantic love compared to the platonic love of friends in your life?
8. How did you feel when you learned about Lizzy's tragic experience with motherhood? In hindsight, how does it affect how you think of her only meeting with Gwen as a child at the beginning of the novel?
9. Gwen makes the brave decision to start a new life in a completely new place after her divorce. Could you see yourself taking a leap like this and starting over? Why or why not?
10. One of the themes the book explores is fated connections. The love Lizzy is unable to claim in her lifetime presents

itself in another generation through Gwen's new relationship with Jack. What are your thoughts about fate and soulmates? Have you ever felt that someone was fated to come into your life?

11. Her great aunt's old row house in Richmond is a big reason the city feels like home to Gwen. For you, what makes a house a home?

12. Between Gwen and Lizzie, which of the storylines did you most connect with? Explain why.

Enhance Your Book Club

1. Family Stories: Ask each book club member to bring one old family photo --- ideally of a woman from a previous generation --- and share what they know (or don't know) about her story.

2. Make a Keepsake Box: Take inspiration from Lizzy's keepsake box that she passed down to Gwen. Have members bring all the items they'd like to include in their own keepsake box. They can bring a special box to put all their items in or decorate a shoe box at the meeting. Discuss why they chose each item and to whom they'd like to give the keepsake box.

3. Local Archive Field Trip: Visit a local historical society, library archive or genealogical society and learn how to trace your family's records. This also can be an online activity that uses online databases for ancestry, genealogy and historical records.

4. Double Feature Movie Night: Watch a film set during World War I that mirrors Lizzy's story, followed by a contemporary film touching on Gwen's circumstances. WWI movie example: *Testament of Youth*; Contemporary movie example: *Gloria Bell*.

Author Bio

Emily Nydam is a musician and author whose career began as a lawyer. She graduated from Yale University, where she was awarded the Yale Schoenberg Prize for writing and went on to earn her J.D. from Georgetown University Law Center, serving as Managing Editor of *The Georgetown Law Journal*. An accomplished singer, Emily has released solo albums and performed at Jazz at Lincoln Center and the Sydney Opera House. She and her husband have lived across the United States and abroad, including in Thailand, where their twin sons were born. *JOURNEYING HOME* is her debut multi-generational historical novel set against the backdrop of World War I.

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