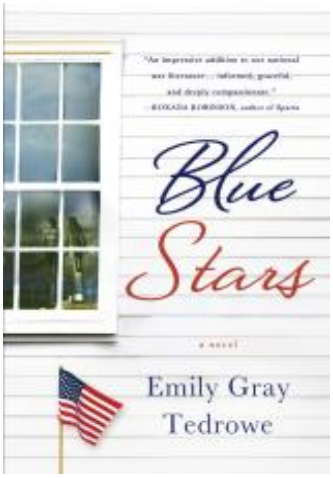
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Blue Stars

by Emily Gray Tedrowe



About the Book

Emily Gray Tedrowe has written an extraordinary novel about ordinary people, a graceful and gritty portrayal of what it?s like for the women whose husbands and sons are deployed in Iraq.

BLUE STARS brings to life the realities of the modern day home front: how to get through the daily challenges of motherhood and holding down a job while bearing the stress and uncertainty of war, when everything can change in an instant. It tells the story of Ellen, a Midwestern literature professor, who is drawn into the war when her legal ward Michael enlists as a Marine; and of Lacey, a proud Army wife who struggles to pay the bills and keep things going for her son while her husband is deployed. Ellen and Lacey cope with the fear and stress of a loved one at war while trying to get by in a society that often ignores or misunderstands what war means to women today. When Michael and Eddie are injured in Iraq, Ellen and Lacey?s lives become intertwined in Walter Reed Army Hospital, where each woman must live while caring for her wounded soldier. They form an alliance, and an unlikely friendship, while helping each other survive the dislocated world of the army hospital. Whether that means fighting for proper care for their men, sharing a six-pack, or coping with irrevocable loss, Ellen and Lacey pool their strengths to make it through. In the end, both women are changed, not only by the war and its fallout, but by each other.

Discussion Guide

1. Ellen lives a quiet, bookish life as an English professor in the Midwest. Why does she agree to become Michael?s guardian? How has this changed her life, and changed the life of her family?

2. Why did Lacey marry Eddie? What has she found in the military community that has given her life new meaning?

3. Ellen?s daughter Jane is a wild one. What do you think about their relationship? How do they cope when Michael is deployed to Iraq?

4. What do you think about the author?s portrayal of the way the rest of society treats military wives and mothers? Do you know any military families? How true to life is this depiction?

5. When both women are told about their loved ones? injuries, they react in different, yet similar ways. What is this experience like for Ellen and Lacey?

6. In the second half of the book, Ellen and Lacey meet and become friends. Is it unusual that they would become so close? How much of their friendship is based on their circumstances, and how much on their personalities?

7. Throughout the book, women?s friendships and women?s communities are important to the characters. What are some examples? How do the women in this novel lean on each other within the mostly-male world of the military?

8. What do you think about Lacey and Jim? Does her relationship with him change your opinion of her character?

9. When Jane confronts her mother about Michael?s injury and being ?in charge of everyone?s bodies,? what does she mean? How does Ellen respond to this, and why does it upset her so much?

10. What do you think about the end of the novel? Do you imagine that Ellen and Lacey will keep in touch? How has each woman changed the other?

Author Bio

Emily Gray Tedrowe is the Chicago-based author of the novels THE TALENTED MISS FARWELL, BLUE STARS and COMMUTERS. She earned a PhD in English literature from New York University, and a BA from Princeton University. She has received an Illinois Arts Council award, as well as fellowships from the Ragdale Foundation, Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and the Sewanee Writers Conference. A frequent book reviewer for *USA Today* as well as other publications, Tedrowe also writes essays, interviews and short stories.

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Critical Praise

?A strikingly nuanced portrait of military family life...If you?ve ever wondered what happens when wounded service members return, read this book.?

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