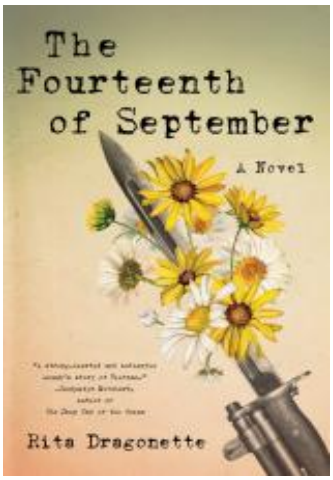
The Fourteenth of September

by Rita Dragonette



About the Book

Inspired by the fact that so little was known of the female stories of the Vietnam War years and determined to give voice to the women of her generation, debut novelist Rita Dragonette drew upon her personal experiences as a student on an army scholarship in 1969-1970 and crafted this compelling, coming-of-age historical novel.

Private First Class Judy Talton celebrates her 19th birthday by secretly joining the antiwar movement on her college campus. As the recipient of an army scholarship and the daughter of a military family, Judy has a lot to lose. But her doubts about the ethics of war have escalated, especially after her birthdate is pulled as the first in the new draft lottery. If she were a man, she would have been among the first off to Vietnam with an under-fire life expectancy measured in seconds. The stakes become clear for Judy as she is propelled towards a life-altering choice as fateful as that of any lottery draftee, yet also finds herself down a path of self-discovery and, ultimately, a ?coming of conscience."

Kirkus Reviews called this debut ?an often fresh take on the collegiate anti-war movement in small-town America.?

» Click here to read a Q&A with Rita Dragonette.

Discussion Guide

Featuring questions by *New York Times* bestselling author Jacquelyn Mitchard

1. Women of a previous generation were not combat soldiers, but they were often in harm?s way. So how is Judy?s situation, given the role she has agreed to play in the Vietnam conflict, the same or different from the young men she knows who are facing the draft?

2. Is David a true philosophical leader? Is his commitment to the anti-war movement really more a way for him to

express his own drama? Or is his nature explainable by the fact of his being so young?

3. Discuss the character of Wil. Wil is fatalistic about his chances for survival. Is he doomed by fate, like his chosen namesake, or by his own demons?

4. The issue of women?s friendship was a controversy during the Vietnam anti-war movement, which preceded the women?s movement in United States history. It is also a controversy in THE FOURTEENTH OF SEPTEMBER. Does Judy form strong women?s friendships, or is she, like so many women activists during the Vietnam period, a handmaid to the political and social momentum created by the men in her circle?

5. It?s said that the end of a novel is the beginning of the world that comes after the story ends. What does the way that Rita Dragonette wrote the conclusion say about the way Judy?s brief but intense involvement with the anti-war movement will inform the rest of her life?

6. Veteran writers insist that every character in a novel has a secret. Talk about some of the secrets kept by major and minor characters in THE FOURTEENTH OF SEPTEMBER. What is Michael?s secret? How about Lori? Does Vida, who seems so open, have a secret as well?

7. How is the issue of morality in the United States? involvement in Vietnam played out in the novel? How is an understanding of the USA?s role in Vietnam relevant to young American readers as they consider their country?s involvement in international conflicts?

8. Many young men who faced the draft for the Vietnam War had fathers who were veterans of World War II or the Korean conflict. Judy?s situation is unusual in that she?s a young woman in conflict with her mother, who is a veteran. How do you think the mother?s character was shaped by her experience in what history considers a ?just war? as opposed to Judy?s experience as a protestor?

9. Is there a current conflict involving the United States that could end up ?another Vietnam?? Are stories about conflicts in which the United States did not play a glorious role as important as those in which U.S. forces were heroes? Why?

10. In some respects, Judy is very much a girl when she heads for college, inexperienced and naive. How do you think her involvement in the anti-war movement contributes to the character?s maturity? How does it shape her future? What other events in this critical year make Judy the woman she will become?

Bonus! Test your lit knowledge. Do you believe that there is a literature of anti-war novels, just as there is a literature of combat novels? What are other novels that are like THE FOURTEENTH OF SEPTEMBER for other wars? Would you consider DOCTOR ZHIVAGO to be an anti-war story? A LAKE IN THE WOODS by Tim O?Brien? SLAUGHTERHOUSE FIVE by Kurt Vonnegut? Hemingway?s A FAREWELL TO ARMS?

Author Bio

Rita Dragonette is a writer who, after spending nearly 30 years telling the stories of others as an award-winning public relations executive, has returned to her original creative path.

THE FOURTEENTH OF SEPTEMBER is her award-winning debut novel and is based upon her personal experience on campus during the Vietnam War. She is currently at work on three other books: an homage to THE SUN ALSO RISES about expats chasing their last dream in San Miguel de Allende, a World War II novel based upon her interest in the impact of war on and through women, and a memoir in essays. She lives and writes in Chicago, where she also hosts literary salons to showcase authors and their new books to avid readers.

To learn more, please visit www.ritadragonette.com and connect with her on the following: Facebook (@ritadragonetteofficial), Instagram (@ritadragonette) and Twitter (@ritadragonette).

Critical Praise

?Rita Dragonette has written a strong-hearted and authentic novel about a naive young girl and her struggle to reconcile the dissonance between the world she sees and the world she was raised to believe in. Judy is truly a quiet hero; you won?t forget her.?

The Fourteenth of September
by Rita Dragonette

Publication Date: September 18, 2018
Genres: Fiction, Historical Fiction, Women's Fiction
Paperback: 376 pages
Publisher: She Writes Press
ISBN-10: 1631524534
ISBN-13: 9781631524530