ReadingGroupGuides
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The Kitchen Front

by Jennifer Ryan

About the Book

From the bestselling author of THE CHILBURY LADIES? CHOIR comes an unforgettable novel of a BBC-sponsored wartime cooking competition and the four women who enter for a chance to better their lives.

Two years into World War II, Britain is feeling her losses: The Nazis have won battles, the Blitz has destroyed cities, and U-boats have cut off the supply of food. In an effort to help housewives with food rationing, a BBC radio program called "The Kitchen Front" is holding a cooking contest --- and the grand prize is a job as the program?s first-ever female co-host. For four very different women, winning the competition would present a crucial chance to change their lives.

For a young widow, it?s a chance to pay off her husband?s debts and keep a roof over her children?s heads. For a kitchen maid, it?s a chance to leave servitude and find freedom. For a lady of the manor, it?s a chance to escape her wealthy husband?s increasingly hostile behavior. And for a trained chef, it?s a chance to challenge the men at the top of her profession.

These four women are giving the competition their all --- even if that sometimes means bending the rules. But with so much at stake, will the contest that aims to bring the community together only serve to break it apart?

Discussion Guide

1. How are Gwendoline, Audrey, Nell and Zelda different? Do they have any traits in common?

2. Which character did you most relate to and why?

3. Who did you feel had the most pivotal transformation, and did her shifts feel realistic?

4. There are many other themes in the novel --- second chances, hope, family bonds, overcoming adversity. Which themes resonated with you the most?

5. How does the time period inform the characters? interactions and decisions throughout the book?

6. What role do wealth and status play in the characters? perspectives on life and on each other?

7. Discuss how you feel about the ending. Is it satisfying? If so, why? If not, why not, and how would you change it? What do you think will happen next to the main characters?

8. The setting of WWII England is intrinsic to THE KITCHEN FRONT. Discuss the ways in which the setting functions as a character in the novel and how each of the human characters relates to it.

9. Compare this book to others your group has read. Is it similar to any of them? Did you like it more or less than other books you?ve read? What do you think will be your lasting impression of the book?

10. What do you think the author?s goal was in writing this book? What ideas was she trying to illustrate? What message was she trying to send?

11. What scene would you point out as the pivotal moment in the narrative? How did it make you feel?

Author Bio

Jennifer Ryan is the author of THE CHILBURY LADIES' CHOIR, THE SPIES OF SHILLING LANE, THE KITCHEN FRONT, THE WEDDING DRESS SEWING CIRCLE,THE UNDERGROUND LIBRARY and THE QUEEN'S CORONATION. She previously was a book editor with *The Economist*, DK and the BBC. After marrying, she moved from London to Washington, D.C., and now lives in Northern Virginia with her husband and two children. Her novels are inspired by her grandmother?s tales of the war in Britain.

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