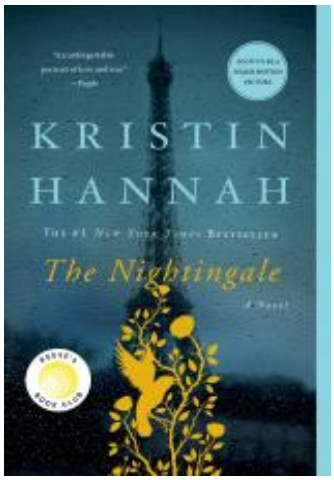
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The Nightingale

by Kristin Hannah



About the Book

A #1 *New York Times* bestseller and *Wall Street Journal* Best Book of the Year, this unforgettable novel of love and strength in the face of war has enthralled a generation.

France, 1939. In the quiet village of Carriveau, Vianne Mauriac says goodbye to her husband, Antoine, as he heads for the Front. She doesn't believe that the Nazis will invade France...but invade they do, in droves of marching soldiers, in caravans of trucks and tanks, in planes that fill the skies and drop bombs upon the innocent. When a German captain requisitions Vianne's home, she and her daughter must live with the enemy or lose everything. Without food or money or hope, as danger escalates all around them, she is forced to make one impossible choice after another to keep her family alive.

Vianne's sister, Isabelle, is a rebellious 18-year-old girl, searching for purpose with all the reckless passion of youth. While thousands of Parisians march into the unknown terrors of war, she meets Gäetan, a partisan who believes the French can fight the Nazis from within France, and she falls in love as only the young can...completely. But when he betrays her, Isabelle joins the Resistance and never looks back, risking her life time and again to save others.

With courage, grace and powerful insight, bestselling author Kristin Hannah captures the epic panorama of World War II and illuminates an intimate part of history seldom seen: the women's war. THE NIGHTINGALE tells the stories of two sisters, separated by years and experience, by ideals, passion and circumstance, each embarking on her own dangerous path toward survival, love and freedom in German-occupied, war-torn France --- a heartbreakingly beautiful novel that celebrates the resilience of the human spirit and the durability of women. It is a novel for everyone, a novel for a lifetime.

Discussion Guide

1. THE NIGHTINGALE opens with an intriguing statement that lays out one of the major themes of the book: ?If I have

learned anything in this long life of mine, it is this: In love we find out who we want to be; in war we find out who we are.? What do you think the narrator means by this? Is love the ideal and war the reality? How does war change the way these characters love? How does love influence their actions in the war? On a personal level, has love affected your life choices? Have those choices affected who and how you love?

2. Take a moment to talk about the narrative structure of THE NIGHTINGALE. Why do you think Kristin Hannah chose to keep the narrator?s identity a secret in the beginning and end of the novel? Were you surprised by who it turned out to be? Did you go back and reread the beginning of the novel once you finished? Were you satisfied when you discovered who was narrating the novel?

3. Many characters chose to construct a secret identity in THE NIGHTINGALE. How did pretending to be someone else determine each character?s fate, for better or worse? And what about those who had no choice, like Ari and Julien?

4. The sisters Isabelle and Vianne respond to the war in very different ways. Isabelle reacts with anger and defiance, risking her life to join the resistance against Nazi occupation. Vianne proceeds with caution and fear, avoiding conflicts for the sake of her children. Who do you admire --- or relate to, or sympathize with --- more, Vianne or Isabelle? Discuss your reasons. You may choose to share your own stories and experiences as well.

5. The book captures many of the era?s attitudes about men and women. Isabelle, for example, is told that women do not go to war. Vianne is confused by her new wartime role as provider. Their father, Julien, is cold and distant, unwilling to fulfill his parental duties after his wife dies. Have gender roles changed much since World War II? Have women always been strong in the face of adversity, but not recognized for their efforts? Vianne says that ?men tell stories...women get on with it.? Do you agree with her?

6. Isabelle?s niece Sophie admires her aunt?s courage: ?Tante Isabelle says it?s better to be bold than meek. She says if you jump off a cliff at least you?ll fly before you fall.? Do you agree? Is it better to take a risk and fail than never try at all? Do you think you could have acted as heroically as Isabelle under such horrifying circumstances? Who is more heroic in your mind --- Isabelle or Vianne?

7. Perhaps one of the most chilling moments in the book is when Vianne provides Captain Beck with a list: *Jews. Communists. Homosexuals. Freemasons. Jehovah?s Witnesses*. We know now how wrong it was to provide this list, but can you understand why Vianne did it? What do you think you would have done?

8. Each of the sisters experiences love in a different way. Vianne?s love is that of a mature woman, a wife and a mother devoted to her family; Isabelle?s love is youthful and impulsive, more of a girlish dream than a reality. How did Isabelle?s feelings of abandonment shape her personality and her life? How did Vianne?s maternal love lead to acts of heroism, saving the lives of Jewish children? How did love --- and war --- bring these two sisters closer together?

9. Take a moment to talk about Beck. Is he a sympathetic character? Did you believe he was a good man, or was he just trying to seduce Vianne? Did he deserve his fate?

10. When Isabelle works with Anouk and other women of the French resistance, she notices ?the wordless bond of women.? What does she mean? Do you agree that women who come from different backgrounds but share a common path can create a silent bond with other women? Why do you think this is so?

11. Vianne recalls her husband Antoine telling her that ?we choose to see miracles.? What does he mean by this? Is it his way of telling his wife he knows the truth about their son?s biological father? Or is it his way of looking at life, of coping with the terrible events they?ve lived through? Is seeing the beauty in the world an active choice? Is it possible to find miracles in our lives, if we look for them?

12. Discuss the scene in which Ari is taken away. What do you believe is the right answer in this situation --- if there is one? What would you have done in Vianne?s position?

13. Do you think Julien had a right to know who his real father was? Would you have made the same decision Vianne did?

14. Finally, a show of hands: Who cried --- or at least got a little choked up --- while reading this book? Which scenes moved you the most? Which character?s fate would you say was the most tragic? The most poignant? The most harrowing? Did the book give you a better understanding of life under Nazi occupation during World War II? Did it move you, inspire you, haunt you? And finally, what will you remember most about THE NIGHTINGALE?

Author Bio

Kristin Hannah is the award-winning and bestselling author of more than 20 novels, including the international blockbuster, THE NIGHTINGALE, which was named Goodreads Best Historical Fiction novel for 2015 and won the coveted People?s Choice award for best fiction in the same year. Additionally, it was a selection of the Reese Witherspoon Book Club in 2023. It was named a Best Book of the Year by Amazon, iTunes, Buzzfeed, the *Wall Street Journal, Paste* and *The Week*. In 2018, THE GREAT ALONE became an instant *New York Times* #1 bestseller and was named the Best Historical Novel of the Year by Goodreads.

THE FOUR WINDS was published in February 2021 and immediately hit #1 on the *New York Times, Wall Street Journal, USA Today* and Indie bookstores? bestseller lists. Additionally, it was selected as a book club pick by the both "Today" and the Book of the Month club, which named it the best book of 2021.

THE NIGHTINGALE is currently in production at Tri Star, with Dakota and Elle Fanning set to star. Tri Star has also optioned THE GREAT ALONE, and it is in development. FIREFLY LANE, her beloved novel about two best friends, was the #1 Netflix series around the world, in the week it came out. The popular TV show starred Katherine Heigl and Sarah Chalke, and season two concluded the series in April 2023.

A former attorney, Kristin lives in the Pacific Northwest.

Critical Praise

?I loved Kristin Hannah's THE NIGHTINGALE. She has captured a particular slice of French life during World War II with wonderful details and drama. But what I loved most about the novel was the relationship between the two sisters and Hannah's exploration of what we do in moments of great challenge. Do we rise to the occasion or fail? Are we heroes or cowards? Are we loyal to the people we love most or do we betray them? Hannah explores these questions with probing finesse and great heart.?

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