



The Nightingale

by Kristin Hannah

Martin County Library System Book Discussion Kit:

The Nightingale by Kristin Hannah

Included in the Kit:

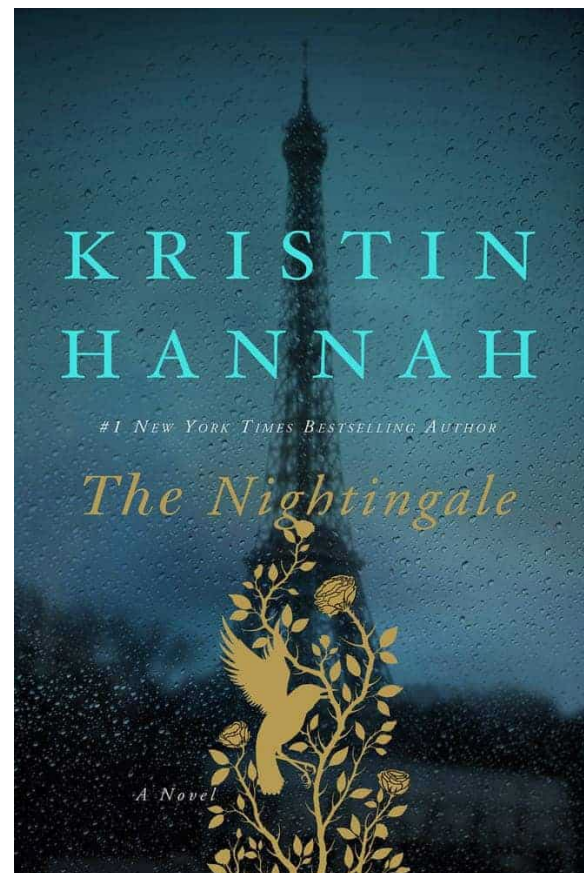
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Book summary

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 eighteen-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 G  tan, 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 lifetime and again to save others.





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With courage, grace and powerful insight, bestselling author Kristin Hannah captures the epic panorama of WWII 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.

(Source: <https://kristinhannah.com/books/the-nightingale-deluxe-edition/>)



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Meet the Author

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 of 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 Show 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 stars Katherine Heigl and Sarah Chalke and Season Two is currently set to conclude the series on April 27, 2023.

A former attorney, Kristin lives in the Pacific Northwest.

(Source: <https://kristinhannah.com/about-kristin-bio/>)



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Discussion Questions

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 war 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. Freemans. 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?



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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 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*?

(Source: <https://kristinhannah.com/books/the-nightingale/book-clubs/>)

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Recipes

Vianne's Potato & Lardon Soup

Ingredients:

- 1 lb. bacon, sliced
- 1 cup celery, diced
- 2 leeks, sliced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2.5 lbs. potatoes, cubed
- 4-6 cups chicken stock
- 1 tsp white pepper
- 2 tsp garlic salt
- 1 tsp onion powder
- 2 tsp chicken bouillon
- 3 Tbsp butter
- ¼ cup flour
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 2 tsp dried tarragon
- 3 Tbsp fresh cilantro, chopped
- Green onions, sliced
- Cheddar, shredded



Directions:

Cook the bacon until crispy. Remove from the grease with a slotted spoon and place on a plate covered in paper towels to rest. Discard the bacon grease, except for 1/4 cup. Add celery and leeks to a Dutch oven with the 1/4 cup bacon grease. Cook down until tender and add garlic and continue to cook until fragrant. Add the potatoes and cover with stock. Add salt, pepper, garlic salt, onion powder and chicken bouillon. Cover and simmer until potatoes are tender when pierced with a fork, about 15 mins. In a separate pan, melt butter. Whisk in flour and stir for 2-3 minutes. Whisk in heavy cream, tarragon and cilantro. Bring to a boil and cook until mixture is thick. Stir into the potato soup. Garnish individual bowls with bacon lardon, green onions and cheddar.

(Source: <https://thenerdygourmet.com/2020/02/17/viannes-potato-lardon-soup/>)



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Recipes Continuation

Rachel's Canelés

Ingredients:

- 2 tsp vanilla
- 2 ¼ cup milk
- 1 cup sugar
- ¾ cup flour
- ¼ tsp salt
- ½ tsp ground nutmeg
- 3 ½ Tbsp butter, melted
- 1 egg
- 3 egg yolks
- 4 Tbsp whiskey
- 1 Tbsp beeswax, food grade
- 4 Tbsp butter
- Canelés molds



Directions:

Heat the milk and vanilla until simmering. Meanwhile, whisk together the eggs, sugar and melted butter. Add half of the heated milk and mix until combined. Mix in flour and salt. Slowly stir in the rest of the milk and the rum. Refrigerate.

Refrigerate 24+ hours: heat the oven to 525. Set a cooling rack over paper towels. Have the molds handy. Melt the butter and beeswax together. Microwaved them for 20 second increments until they were all melted in a glass Pyrex measuring cup. Pour into a mold, then pour the beeswax mix back into the cup. Place the mold upside down on the cooling rack to drain. Repeat until all the molds are coated. I placed mine in the freezer while the oven heated. Take the batter out of the refrigerator and whisk vigorously for a couple of minutes. Once the oven is ready, take the molds out of the freezer and fill. Leave 1/4" at the top of the molds to prevent overflow. Put in the oven and bake at 525 for 8 minutes. Leaving the oven door shut, decrease the temp to 375 and continue to bake for 35-40 minutes. My cake tester came out clean at 35 minutes. Immediately turn molds upside down on the cooling rack (using oven mitts, of course). The pastries should slide right out. Let cool to room temperature.

(Source: <https://thenerdygourmet.com/2020/02/17/rachels-caneles/>)