Tompkins County Public Library Book Kit

The Nightingale
by Kristin Hannah
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In love we find out who we want to be.
In war we find out who we are.

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 Gäétan, 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 WWII and illuminates an intimate part of history seldom seen: the women’s war.

*This book summary is from LitLovers- litlovers.com*
**Author Biography**

- Birth—September, 1960
- Where—Southern California, USA
- Reared—Western Washington State
- Education—J.D., from a school in Washington (state)
- Awards—Awards—Golden Heart Award; Maggie Award; National Reader's Choice
- Currently—lives in Bainbridge Island, Washington

Kristin Hannah is an award-winning and bestselling author of more than 20 novels including Winter Garden, True Colors, and the blockbuster Firefly Lane.

Her novel Home Front has been optioned for film by 1492 Films (produced the Oscar-nominated The Help) with Chris Columbus attached direct.

Kristin’s newest release is the highly anticipated The Nightingale, which will be in stores on February 3, 2015.

Kristin was born in September 1960 in Southern California and grew up at the beach, making sand castles and playing in the surf. When she was eight years old, her father drove the family to Western Washington which they called home.

After working in a trendy advertising agency, Kristin decided to go to law school. "But you're going to be a writer" are the prophetic words she would never forget from her mother. Kristin was in her third- and final-year of law school and her mom was in the hospital, facing the end of her long battle with cancer. Kristin was shocked to discover that her mother believed she would become a writer. For the next few months, they collaborated on a novel. After her mom's death, she packed up all those bits and pieces of paper and research they'd collected and put them in a box in the back of her closet. Kristin got married and continued practicing law.

Then Kristin found out she was pregnant and was on bed rest for five months. By the time she'd read every book in the house and started asking her husband for cereal boxes to read, she knew she was a goner. That's when her husband reminded her of the book she'd started with her mom. Kristin pulled out the boxes of research material, dusted them off and began writing. By the time their son was born, she'd finished a first draft and found an obsession.

The rejections came, of course, and they stung for a while, but each one really just spurred her to try harder, work more. In 1990, Kristin got "the call," and in that moment, she went from a young mother with a cooler-than-average hobby to a professional writer, and has never looked back. In all the years between then and now, she has never lost her love of, or her enthusiasm for, telling stories. Kristin feels truly blessed to be a wife, a mother, and a writer. Her novel, Firefly Lane, became a runaway bestseller in 2009, a touchstone novel that brought women together.

*This biography is from Litlovers- litlovers.com
Book Reviews

“In love we find out who we want to be; in war we find out who we are,” Hannah’s narrator, Viann Mauriac, proclaims as she looks back on her life in France. The bestselling author hits her stride in this page-turning tale about two sisters, one in the French countryside, the other in Paris, who show remarkable courage in the German occupation during WWII. Through Viann we learn how life was disrupted when husbands and fathers were forced to enlist while the Germans took over their towns and villages, billeting themselves in people’s homes, gorging on food, and forcing the starved locals to wait in endless lines for rations. Viann’s younger sister, Isabelle, always rebellious, joins the resistance in Paris, finds love with another resistance fighter and risks her life guiding downed British and American paratroopers over the Pyrenees and out of France. Viann does her part too, saving 19 Jewish children by hiding them in a convent. Despite having a German officer in her own home, she also takes in a Jewish baby—her best friend’s son—when his mother is sent to a concentration camp. The author ably depicts war’s horrors through the eyes of these two women, whose strength of character shines through no matter their differences. Publishers Weekly

Hannah’s new novel is an homage to the extraordinary courage and endurance of French women during World War II. In 1995, an elderly unnamed widow is moving into an Oregon nursing home on the urging of her controlling son, Julien, a surgeon. This trajectory is interrupted when she receives an invitation to return to France to attend a ceremony honoring passeurs: people who aided the escape of others during the war. Cut to spring, 1940: Viann has said goodbye to husband Antoine, who’s off to hold the Maginot line against invading Germans. She returns to tending her small farm, Le Jardin, in the Loire Valley, teaching at the local school and coping with daughter Sophie’s adolescent rebellion. Soon, that world is upended: The Germans march into Paris and refugees flee south, overrunning Viann’s land. Her long-estranged younger sister, Isabelle, who has been kicked out of multiple convent schools, is sent to Le Jardin by Julien, their father in Paris, a drunken, decidedly unpaternal Great War veteran. As the depredations increase in the occupied zone—food rationing, systematic looting, and the billeting of a German officer, Capt. Beck, at Le Jardin—Isabelle’s outspokenness is a liability. She joins the Resistance, volunteering for dangerous duty: shepherding downed Allied airmen across the Pyrenees to Spain. Code-named the Nightingale, Isabelle will rescue many before she’s captured. Meanwhile, Viann’s journey from passive to active resistance is less dramatic but no less wrenching. Hannah vividly demonstrates how the Nazis, through starvation, intimidation and barbarity both casual and calculated, demoralized the French, engineering a community collapse that enabled the deportations and deaths of more than 70,000 Jews. Hannah’s proven storytelling skills are ideally suited to depicting such cataclysmic events, but her tendency to sentimentalize undermines the gravitas of this tale. Still, a respectful and absorbing page-turner. Kirkus
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 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 his 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?

(Questions issued by the publisher.)
Further Reading

If you enjoy reading the work of Kristin Hannah, try the works of these authors or any of the titles linked below.

Barbara Delinsky
   Luanne Rice
   Jennifer Chiaverini
   Nicholas Sparks
   Dorothy Garlock
   Sandra Steffen
   Alisa Valdes
   Billie Letts

The Light in the Ruins
By Bohjalian, Chris
2013-07 - Doubleday Books
9780385534819 Check Our Catalog

In 1955 Florence, Italy, a serial killer is carefully, gruesomely killing off members of the Rosati family. Tearing out each victim's heart and leaving it on display, the murderer has something important to say about this family of noble blood, and Det. Serafina Bettini suspects it may have something to do with their activities during World War II.

The Daughters of Mars
By Keneally, Thomas
2013-08 - Atria Books
9781476734613 Check Our Catalog

From the acclaimed author of "Schindler's List" comes the epic, unforgettable story of two sisters whose lives are transformed by the cataclysm of the First World War.

IN 1915, Naomi and Sally Durance, two spirited Australian sisters, join the war effort as nurses, escaping the confines of their father's farm and carrying a guilty secret with them. Though they are used to tending the sick, nothing could have prepared them for what they confront, first on a hospital ship near Gallipoli, then on the Western Front.
Suite Francaise
By Nemirovsky, Irene
Translator Smith, Sandra, Dr
2006-04 - Alfred A. Knopf
9781400044733 Check Our Catalog

Awards:

An extraordinary novel of life under Nazi occupation--discovered and published 62 years after the author's tragic death at Auschwitz. Subtle, often fiercely ironic, and deeply compassionate, "Suite Francaise" is both a piercing record of its time and a brilliant, profoundly moving work of art.

All the Light We Cannot See
By Doerr, Anthony
2014-05 - Scribner Book Company
9781476746586 Check Our Catalog

Awards:

From the highly acclaimed, multiple award-winning Anthony Doerr, a stunningly ambitious and beautiful novel about a blind French girl and a German boy whose paths collide in occupied France as both try to survive the devastation of World War II.

Winter of the World
By Follett, Ken
2012-09 - Dutton Books
9780525952923 Check Our Catalog

The follow-up to the #1 "New York Times" bestseller "Fall of Giants" is a brilliant, page-turning epic about the heroism and honor of World War II, and the dawn of the atomic age.

The Orchardist
By Coplin, Amanda
2012-08 - HarperTorch
9780062188502 Check Our Catalog

Awards:

Set in the untamed American West, a highly original and haunting debut novel about a makeshift family whose dramatic lives are shaped by violence, love, and an indelible connection to the land.
The Narrow Road to the Deep North
By Flanagan, Richard
2014-08 - Knopf Publishing Group
9780385352857 Check Our Catalog

Awards:
ALA Notable Books (2015), Man Booker Prize (2014)

A novel of love and war that traces the life of one man -- an Australian surgeon -- a prisoner-of-war camp on the Thai- Burma Death Railway during World War II, up to the present.

The Sins of the Father
By Archer, Jeffrey
2012-05 - St. Martin's Press
9781250000972 Check Our Catalog

International bestselling author Archer returns with his most ambitious work of epic storytelling--a multi-generational saga of fate, fortune, and redemption that began with "Only Time Will Tell."

The Buddha in the Attic
By Otsuka, Julie
2011-08 - Knopf Publishing Group
9780307700001 Check Our Catalog

Awards:

Otsuka delivers the long-awaited follow-up to "When the Emperor Was Divine"--a stunning tour de force that tells the story of a group of women brought from Japan to San Francisco in the 1900s as mail-order brides.

Secrets of a Charmed Life
By Meissner, Susan
2015-02 - New American Library
9780451419927 Check Our Catalog

Present day, Oxford, England. Young American scholar Kendra Van Zant, eager to pursue her vision of a perfect life, interviews Isabel McFarland just when the elderly woman is ready to give up secrets about the war that she has kept for decades--beginning with who she really is. What Kendra receives from Isabel is both a gift and a burden--one that will test her convictions and her heart.
A Long Time Gone
By White, Karen
2014-06 - New American Library
9780451240460 Check Our Catalog

When Vivien Walker left her home in the Mississippi Delta, she swore never to go back, as generations of the women in her family had. But in the spring, nine years to the day since she'd left, that's exactly what happens--Vivien returns, fleeing from a broken marriage and her lost dreams for children.

The Book of Aron
By Shepard, Jim
2015-05 - Knopf Publishing Group
9781101874318 Check Our Catalog

Aron and a handful of boys and girls in the Warsaw Ghetto smuggle and trade things through the "quarantine walls" to keep their people alive until he is rescued by a Jewish-Polish doctor and advocate of children's rights who instills within him the importance of letting the world know the atrocities they have all suffered at the hands of the enemy.

A God in Ruins
By Atkinson, Kate
2015-05 - Little Brown and Company
9780316176538 Check Our Catalog

This book tells the dramatic story of the 20th Century through Ursula's beloved younger brother Teddy--would-be poet, heroic pilot, husband, father, and grandfather--as he navigates the perils and progress of a rapidly changing world. After all that Teddy endures in battle, his greatest challenge is living in a future he never expected to have.

An ingenious and moving exploration of one ordinary man's path through extraordinary times, A GOD IN RUINS proves once again that Kate Atkinson is one of the finest novelists of our age.

The Dynamite Room
By Hewitt, Jason
2015-03 - Little Brown and Company
9780316327657 Check Our Catalog

It's July 1940, and eleven-year-old Lydia has just run away from life as a child evacuee in Wales. She arrives in her English village, gas mask in tow, only to find it abandoned. Her family's house is shuttered and empty, the windows covered by black-out blinds--but Lydia settles in, determined to wait there until they return. Late that night he comes: a wounded soldier, gun in hand, heralding a full-blown German invasion. There are, the man explains, certain rules that Lydia must now follow. He says he won't hurt Lydia, but she cannot leave the house. As the unlikely pair
coexists in the claustrophobic confines of the house, each becomes dependent on
the other for survival. But when Lydia tries to uncover what brought the soldier to
her door, she realizes that he knows more than he should about her family—and that
he's plotting something for them both.

**Somewhere in France: A Novel of the Great War**
**By Robson, Jennifer**
**2013-12 - William Morrow & Company**
**9780062273451 Check Our Catalog**

A daring young woman will risk her life to find her destiny in this atmospheric,
beautifully drawn historical debut novel—a tale of love, hope, and danger set during
the First World War.

Lady Elizabeth Neville-Ashford wants to travel the world, pursue a career, and
marry for love. But in 1914, the stifling restrictions of aristocratic British society and
her mother's rigid expectations forbid Lilly from following her heart. When war
breaks out, the spirited young woman seizes her chance for independence. Defying
her parents, she moves to London and eventually becomes an ambulance driver in
the newly formed Women's Army Auxiliary Corps—an exciting and treacherous job
that takes her close to the Western Front.

Assigned to a field hospital in France, Lilly is reunited with Robert Fraser, her dear
brother Edward's best friend. The handsome Scottish surgeon has always
encouraged Lilly's dreams. She doesn't care that Robbie grew up in poverty—she
yearns for their friendly affection to become something more. Lily is the most
beautiful—and forbidden—woman Robbie has ever known. Fearful for her life, he's
determined to keep her safe, even if it means breaking her heart.

In a world divided by class, filled with uncertainty and death, can their hope for love
survive, or will it become another casualty of this tragic war?