

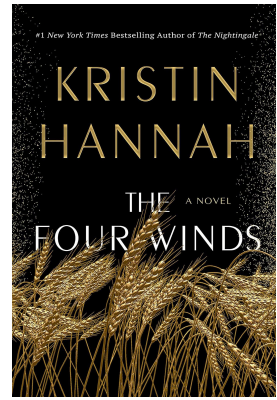


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Discussion Questions

The Four Winds

Kristin Hannah



1. A major theme of *The Four Winds* is obtaining the American Dream whether it's through the financial independence of owning a farm or traveling to California in search of a better life. Do you think the American Dream is myth or reality?
2. Was Elsa's life defined by the cultural expectations for unmarried women? How do you think her failure to meet these expectations affected her?
3. The stories of women have gone largely undocumented throughout history. Why do you think they've gone unreported for so long? Do you think sharing stories will make a difference in future generations?
4. Expectations for young women were sharply defined. How is Elsa shaped by these expectations and her failure to meet them? Do you think societal mores were designed to keep women "in their place"?
5. In 1920s America, there was significant prejudice against Italians. What does Rafe represent to Elsa on the night they meet? Is it strictly physical or is there emotion involved?
6. Flash forward to 1934, the farm is experiencing severe drought. Both Rafe and their daughter Loreda are dreamers and believe there's more to life than just the farm. How are their perspectives similar or different from Elsa's?
7. The adolescent years can be especially difficult on mothers and daughters. Did you dislike Loreda during these years? Did you understand her?
8. What did it take for Loreda to finally understand her mother and why she made the decisions she did?
9. Why does the Martinelli family stay under such brutal conditions - heat, dust storms, lack of food, dying livestock? Does it reveal anything about the grit that fills their bodies?
10. After moving to California, Elsa falls for Jack. How does Elsa's relationship with someone new change her? How was this relationship different from her relationship with Rafe?