**Book Club Questions**

**Oct Book Club:** The Dutch House by Ann Patchett

**Nov Book Club:** No Two Persons by Erica Bauermeister

**The Womeh by Kristin Hannah**

**Sept 28, 2024**

PlayList – The Women by Kristin Hannah on Spotify - https://open.spotify.com/playlist/5Em3SzxZmNsJWM1ZPCVKIe?si=hvGc3fDOStqDqPLdiwK1Nw&pi=u-urhsFxDcRJu7&nd=1&dlsi=af85d58f7f594c35

1. For those who lived during the Vietnam War, can you share your memories of that era? What most sticks out to you? How did it feel reading about that era?
2. And for those who weren’t yet born, how much knowledge did you have about the Vietnam War and this time period prior to reading the novel? Do you feel you learned something new by reading*The Women*?
3. “Women can be heroes.” Frankie believes her future as a wife and mother is set in stone until Rye says this. It’s a small comment that tears a big hole in Frankie’s perception of the world. These words, and her brother’s enlistment, inspire Frankie to join the Army Nurse Corps. Why do you think Frankie’s parents were so appalled by her enlistment in the Army? Was it simply her sex? Or was there more to it? Were you surprised by Frankie’s parents’ reaction?
4. As soon as Frankie arrives to Vietnam, she learns the war is very different than what’s presented to the American public in the media. It’s chaotic, scary and changes every minute. What were your thoughts as you read all the hospital scenes?
5. How does the experience of losing her brother, Finley, impact Frankie’s decisions and interactions as a nurse in Vietnam?
6. Frankie develops a close friendship with her fellow nurses, Barb and Ethel. Let’s talk about how they bonded through their war experiences. How does this friendship change and grow over time? How do Ethel and Barb change Frankie’s view of the world?
7. Frankie also gets close to a married doctor, Jamie. What were your thoughts on their dynamic and budding romance?
8. On Christmas Eve, as Frankie and Barb stand over the body of a deceased soldier, they hear that The Stars & Stripes reported no American casualties the day before even though seven men died in their OR alone. Were you surprised by the disparities in what the public was told about the war? What were your thoughts about how the disillusionment of the government and our involvement in the war changed American’s minds about it?
9. As Frankie’s DEROS nears, she decides to stay on for another tour of duty. Why do you think she decided to extend her time instead of coming back home?
10. After Jamie seemingly dies, Frankie is transferred to another hospital and runs into Rye again. While she’s resistant at first because Rye is engaged, he tells her the engagement is off and they start a romance. Did you trust Rye or did you have your suspicions about him?
11. Both Jamie, and we come to learn Rye, are married but still pursue Frankie. While Jamie is more honest, and it does seem he’s in an unhappy marriage, Rye completely lies to Frankie. Why does it seem that infidelity was common (at least in the story’s context) during the war?
12. This book is divided into two parts, during the war and the aftermath. Let’s first talk about Frankie’s return home and the unhero’s welcome. She is spit on at the airport and has trouble finding a cab to take her home. She learns that her parents are so ashamed of her service that they lied to their country club friends about it. What were your thoughts as you read the horrible treatment she received? Why were her parents not supportive of her time in the war? What would it feel like to have served your country in wartime only to be spit upon when you came home? How did this treatment affect the veterans in both the long and short term?
13. When she finally returns home, Frankie is constantly told (by civilians and vets alike) that “there were no women in Vietnam.” Considering how many soldiers were injured, why do you think so few seemed to recognize the vital role the female nurses played?
14. Clearly, Frankie suffers from PTSD after the war. At that time, there was very little understanding of the effects of PTSD, and both the military and the medical community dismissed the notion that a woman could suffer from the effects of war. Frankie herself believes that she “wasn’t in combat.” Was she? How do you define being in combat?
15. What were your thoughts about Frankie’s relationship with Henry? Could she have been happy with him long term?
16. The big twist comes out that Rye survived the war. But he lied to Frankie—he’s in fact married with a child. They eventually meet up again and he tells her he wants to leave his wife and they embark on an affair. Let’s discuss Rye’s manipulation. Did you see his betrayal coming? Should Frankie have seen it? What were the clues she missed? Do you think he ever cared about Frankie or was she merely an object to him?
17. It isn’t until her miscarriage and Rye’s return from the Hanoi Hilton that she really begins to spiral out of control. This is when her mother gives her drugs to “take the edge off.” These highly addictive drugs were advertised and prescribed to women as “Mother’s Little Helpers.” Why do you think such ads existed? What purpose did they serve? How did you feel about Frankie’s coping behavior?
18. In the end, what was it that healed her? Was it friendship? The creation of The Vietnam Veterans Memorial to honor Vietnam veterans? Therapy? Sobriety? Why was the ranch in Montana the right fit for Frankie?
19. At the end of the book, Frankie and her friends decide to attend the dedicated of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Why was it important for them to attend? Discuss the history of Vietnam-era veterans and ask yourself what you have learned from this story. What do we owe to our veterans and their families? How can we truly thank them for their service and their sacrifice?
20. At the dedication, Frankie runs into Jamie, who survived. They both talk about the hardships gained from the war but the spark is still there. What does the future hold for them? What did you think about the ending overall?
21. Have you visited the Vietnam Wall or the Vietnam Women’s Memorial in Washington D.C.? Will this novel change the way you experience them if you visit in the future?