

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



Kristin Hannah is an award-winning and bestselling author of more than 20 novels including the international blockbuster, *The Nightingale*, *Winter Garden*, *Night Road*, and *Firefly Lane*.

Her novel, *The Nightingale*, has been published in 43 languages and is currently in movie production at TriStar Pictures, which also optioned her novel, *The Great Alone*. Her novel, *Home Front* has been optioned for film by 1492 Films (produced the Oscar-nominated *The Help*) with Chris Columbus attached to direct.

Kristin is a former-lawyer-turned-writer who lives in the Pacific Northwest with her husband. Her novel, *Firefly Lane*, became a runaway bestseller in 2009, a touchstone novel that brought women together, and *The Nightingale*, in 2015 was voted a best book of the year by Amazon, BuzzFeed, iTunes, *Library Journal*, *Paste*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Week*. Additionally, the novel won the coveted Goodreads and People’s Choice Awards. The audiobook of *The Nightingale* won the Audiobook of the Year Award in the fiction category.

- Author’s website

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 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*?

- <https://www.readinggroupguides.com/reviews/the-nightingale/guide>

BOOK REVIEWS

Booklist

/ Starred Review */* Hannah (Fly Away, 2013) departs from the contemporary novels she's known for with this engrossing tale of two sisters' bravery in occupied France during WWII. Vianne and Isabelle Rossignol took very different paths after their mother's death devastated their family and war turned their father into a distant and withdrawn parent. Older sister Vianne sought comfort in the arms of a schoolmate, getting pregnant and marrying at just 16. Rebellious Isabelle gets herself kicked out of multiple boarding schools. Then the Germans conquer France, and the sisters' lives change drastically. When her husband is captured and detained as a prisoner of war in Germany, Vianne is forced to take in a German captain. Soon she finds herself relying on him to ensure there is food on the table for her daughter. Isabelle joins the Resistance, boldly leading fallen airmen fighting for the liberation of France over the mountains to Spain to safety. Hannah's latest is a page-turner that will no doubt have readers reaching for tissues. This moving, emotional tribute to the brave women who fought behind enemy lines during the war is bound to gain the already immensely popular Hannah an even wider audience. HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: With a 350,000 initial print run and a multiplatform promotional campaign, best-selling Hannah's new novel is positioned to take the book world by storm. -- Huntley, Kristine (Reviewed 12-15-2014) (Booklist, vol 111, number 8, p33)

Publishers Weekly

"In love we find out who we want to be; in war we find out who we are," Hannah's narrator, Vianne 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 Vianne 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. Vianne'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. Vianne 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. Announced first printing of 350,000 copies. (Feb.) --Staff (Reviewed December 1, 2014) (Publishers Weekly, vol 261, issue 50, p).

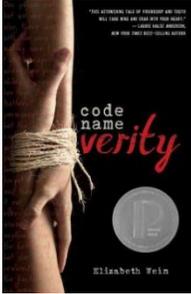
Library Journal

Character growth and development is a strength of this World War II-set novel, although the middle plods during some sections. Sisters Vianne and Isabelle Mauriac are driven apart by unhealed childhood wounds and clashing personalities. When Isabelle is kicked out of boarding school for the umpteenth time for "rebellious" behavior, her embittered veteran father, in the midst of drowning his own battle scars in bourbon, sends the adolescent to her elder sister's house. Meanwhile, Vianne attempts to find salvation from her past by marrying her teenage sweetheart and relocating to the French countryside where she delights in her garden and her school-age daughter. As Hitler's forces invade, both sisters face challenging choices that will show where their loyalties lie. VERDICT Hannah (Summer Island; Firefly Lane) has long been a staple of women's fiction. Readers who enjoy stories with ethical dilemmas and character-driven narratives will enjoy this novel full of emotion and heart. [See Prepub Alert, 8/11/14.]— Julia M. Reffner, Midlothian, VA --Julia M. Reffner (Reviewed January 1, 2015) (Library Journal, vol 140, issue 1, p91)

Kirkus Reviews

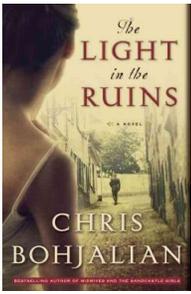
Hannah's new novel is an homage to the extraordinary courage and endurance of Frenchwomen during World War II. In 1995, an elderly unnamed widow is moving into an Oregon nursing home on the urging of her controlling son, Julien, a surgeon. This trajectory is interrupted when she receives an invitation to return to France to attend a ceremony honoring passeurs: people who aided the escape of others during the war. Cut to spring, 1940: Vianne 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 Vianne'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, Vianne'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 Reviews, December 1, 2014)

READALIKES



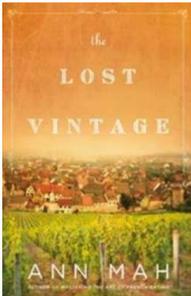
***Code Name Verity* by Elizabeth Wein**

After crash-landing in France in 1943 and being captured by Nazis, a female wireless operator for the British (who goes by Queenie, Eva, Verity, and various other aliases) reveals bits of code in exchange for reprieve from torture...and to postpone her execution.



***The Light in the Ruins* by Chris Bohjalian**

Hoping to safeguard themselves from the ravages of World War II within the walls of their ancient villa in Florence, the noble Rosatis family become prisoners in their home when eighteen-year-old Cristina's courtship by a German lieutenant prompts the Nazis to take over the estate, a situation that leads to a serial murder investigation years later.



***The Lost Vintage* by Ann Mah**

Returning to her ancestral vineyard in Burgundy, an aspiring master wine expert unexpectedly uncovers a lost diary, an unknown relative and a family secret from World War II.