

# The All-Girl Filling Station's Last Reunion

By Fannie Flagg

## Questions and Topics for Discussion

1. A lot of Southern identity is wrapped up in one's family history. "Now, just who are your people?" is an oft-quoted phrase around the region. Sookie's biggest crisis comes when she realizes that her "people" aren't actually who she thought they were. How does Sookie's discovery of her true family affect her identity? How does your own heritage affect your identity?

2. Though Sookie tells us that Lenore's nickname, "Winged Victory," came from the way she entered a room - as if she were the statuesque piece on the hood of a car rushing in - how might "Winged Victory" reflect Lenore's personality in other ways? Does her representation as a classical goddess serve to heighten the air of history and tradition that surrounds her? How might the image of a winged woman tie Lenore in with the ladies of the WASPs?

3. One of the things that we hear repeatedly from Sookie is that she can never stand up for herself - especially to Lenore. We see Fritzzi, on the other hand, repeatedly breaking down barriers in her own time. How would you characterize the different kinds of courage that Fritzzi and Sookie exhibit? In what ways are they similar and in what ways different?

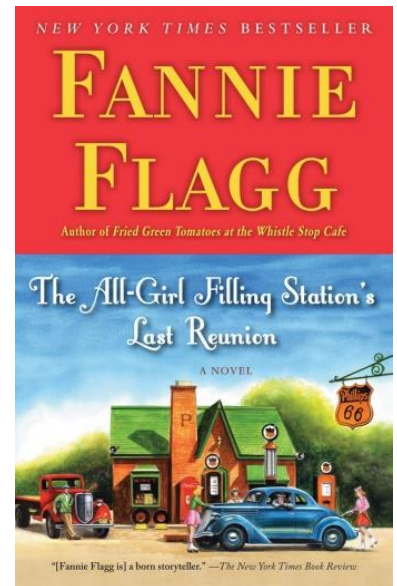
4. Sookie's best friend, Marvaleen, is constantly trying different suggestions from her life coach, Edna Yorba Zorbra. From journaling to yoga to the Goddess Within group, which meets in a yurt, Marvaleen tries every method possible to get over her divorce. How does Sookie's approach to dealing with her problems differ from Marvaleen's? Do you think her friendship with Marvaleen might have helped push her to confront the question of her mother?

5. In *The All-Girl Filling Station's Last Reunion*, we learn about a mostly unknown part of American history - the WASPs of World War II. These women went for thirty-five years without recognition because their records of service were sealed and classified. Were you surprised to learn about this? What parts of the WASPs' story spoke to you?

6. As Sookie comes to terms with her new identity, so must the rest of her family. Sookie's realization that "Dee Dee may not be a Simmons by birth, but she was certainly Lenore's granddaughter, all right" becomes a comforting thought. Have there been times in your life when you have felt so connected to people that you considered them family? What types of circumstances can create such a bond?

7. Sookie tells her friend one day, "I'm telling you, Dena, when you live long enough to see your children begin to look at you with different eyes, and you can look at them not as your children, but as people, it's worth getting older with all the creaks and wrinkles." Have you experienced this change yet with your own parents or children? If so, what were the circumstances in which you began to see them in a different light? How did this make your relationship even more special?

8. "Blue Jay Away," Sookie's brand-new invention, keeps Sookie's house finches and chickadees fed, while also making Sookie famous. Who do you think have been the blue jays in Sookie's own life? Has she learned to manage them successfully?



9. As Pat Conroy says, Fannie Flagg can make even the Polish seem Southern. A large part of Southern and Polish identity is found in their culture - the food, the music, the values. What are some of the things that are unique to your culture? How do they help bring people together?

10. Throughout the book, Dee Dee and Lenore often represent many characteristics that Sookie finds frustrating about being a Simmons, such as the time Dee Dee had to be driven to the church in the back of a moving van so that her Gone with the Wind wedding dress wouldn't be messed up. Once Sookie gains perspective on her family, however, she comes to love and accept Dee Dee's obsession with their history. Have there been times when your own friends or family have frustrated you with their opinions? How were you able to gain perspective and accept their differences?

11. A major theme in this book is accepting your home. Sookie experiences a homecoming many times - after she first meets Fritzi and returns to Point Clear, when she goes to Lenore's bedside at Westminster Village, and when she flies to Pulaski for the All-Girl Filling Station's last reunion. What is your favorite part about going home? Who are the people who make home a home for you?