Book Club Questions

1. In real-time, Iris (Annika) was indeed fifteen and a half when she first saw her future (twenty-three-year-old) husband. He wasn’t aware of her age, due to her maturity and her accelerated high school graduation, until well after he’d begun to fall in love. Her parents put restrictions on their dating. How would you, or your parents, have handled this scenario?

2. The family credo of noblesse oblige figured prominently in Annika’s story. Have your read other books which featured a similar expectation? Do you think noblesse oblige is still relevant today with many countries continuing to have a monarchy?

3. Annika came from a socially prominent Dutch colonial family, while other characters are Indonesian, such as the servants and the veterinarian, or Indos, of mixed ancestry. In what ways is this distinction relevant to the story?

4. This book differs from many WWII books in that it spends a good portion of the story during the protagonist’s life prior to the war. How did her family life, her relationship with animals, and her healing skills aid in her war-time survival?

5. One of Annika and Phillip’s wedding songs in the story features the line, “Show me to carry the present only, with a calm and peaceful mind.” Are there any song lyrics or poetic lines that guide you in tough times?

6. During Annika’s childhood, D.E.I. equated to the colonial Dutch East India. In the present day, DEI is an acronym for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

“Diversity is the presence of differences within a given setting. Equity is the process of ensuring that processes and programs are impartial, fair and provide equal possible outcomes for every individual. Inclusion is the practice of ensuring that people feel a sense of belonging in the workplace.” \*

Where did you see instances in the book which would hint at the brewing revolution of 1949 and the reasons behind it?

7. In the epilogue available free on Sally’s website, the author lays out the next thirty or so years of Annika’s life. Were you curious about what happened to the characters after the war? Did their lives turn out differently than you imagined?”

8. Research sites were named in the References section of the book. Did you go to any of them, and if so, what did you learn?

\*https://builtin.com/diversity-inclusion/what-does-dei-mean-in-the-workplace