

Girls on the Line

- 1) Why do you think Ruby's mother was so hesitant to allow Ruby to have a college education? What would the social ramifications have been?
- 2) What is unique about Ruby's relationship with Evangeline? What could be the larger symbolic value of their friendship?
- 3) French Canadians like Margot suffered a lot of poor treatment due to the strong prejudices against immigrants of all walks of life. We see this in the pizzeria scene. What was particularly interesting about the participants in the scene? Do you think Ruby and Margot handled the situation well? Do you think there was something more than prejudice motivating the waiter?
- 4) The incident with the chief officer falling ill on the crossing to Europe is based on true events. Do you think Ruby was able to effectively take on her role as leader? What did she do well and poorly? What do you think hampered her ability to take over the leadership role seamlessly?
- 5) Why was the decision to send women overseas during WWI so controversial? Why do you think General Pershing insisted on it?
- 6) What do you think of the dynamic between the women? Were they a well-balanced group or did they have elements of dysfunction? What scenes showed their struggles?
- 7) Why do you think the visit to Joan of Arc's birthplace was so poignant for Ruby? How did it impact her relationship with Andrew?
- 8) Why do you think Nathaniel chooses to forsake his new love? What reasons might he have beyond those he shares with Ruby?
- 9) Andrew is a character much like Ruby's father in many respects. How does this color his relationship with Ruby? How does it influence how Mabel will accept them as a couple?
- 10) Why does Mabel choose to make amends? Do you think her actions were selfless or motivated by self-interest? Do you think she grows as a character?
- 11) Evangeline is only present in the beginning and end of the book but is very important to Ruby and her development. Do you think Evangeline has symbolic value to the story beyond the obvious? What might she represent?
- 12) Several of the "Hello Girls" fought for sixty years to get proper recognition for their service from the American government. Many of them didn't join in the legal battles and chose to go on with their post-war lives. Do you think it was worth spending a lifetime of effort to secure the overdue benefits and accolades? What would you have done?