

READING GROUP GUIDE

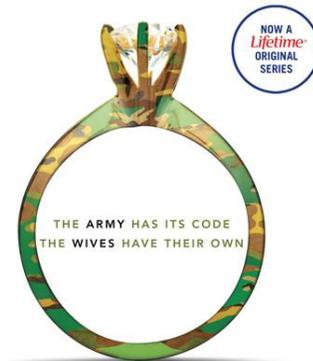
armywives

Army Wives

By Tanya Biank

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"A timely look at the impact of combat and military life on the families the soldiers leave behind."—*The Washington Post*

TANYA BIANK

About this Guide

The following author biography and list of questions about *Army Wives* are intended as resources to aid individual readers and book groups who would like to learn more about the author and this book. We hope that this guide will provide you a starting place for discussion, and suggest a variety of perspectives from which you might approach *Army Wives*.

About the Book

Army Wives is a groundbreaking narrative that details the complex personal challenges Army wives face and presenting a provocative new look at Army life. Tanya Biank goes beyond the sound bites and photo ops of military life and shows what it is really like to be an Army wife.

In the summer of 2002, Army wives were in the headlines after Biank, a military reporter for the Fayetteville Observer, made international news when she broke the story about four Army wives who were brutally murdered by their husbands in a span of six weeks at Fort Bragg, an Army post that is home to the Green Berets, Airborne paratroopers, and Delta Force commandos. By that autumn, Biank, an Army brat herself, realized the still untold story of Army wives lay in the ashes of that tragic and sensationalized summer. She knew the truth: wives were the backbone of the Army. They were strong—not helpless—and deserved more than the sugarcoating that often accompanied their stories in the media.

Army Wives tells the story of four typical Army wives who, in a flash, find themselves neck-deep in extraordinary circumstances that ultimately force them to redefine who they are as women and wives. In this fascinating and meticulously researched account, Biank takes the reader past the Army's gates, where everyone has a role to play, rules are followed, discipline is expected, perfection praised, and perception often overrides reality. She takes a close look at the other woman—the Army itself—and its impact on wives, marriages, and home life, and she explores



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what happens when real life collides with Army convention. This story of strength and perseverance is an eye-opener for those who have never experienced military life, and an anthem to those women who each day live the “unwritten code.”

About the Author

Tanya Biank is a Fulbright Scholar, an award-winning journalist, and a former reporter for the *Fayetteville Observer*. Her coverage of the Fort Bragg Army wife murders in 2002 led to Congressional inquiries and changes in Army policy. The daughter of a career Army officer, she lives in the Washington, D.C., area with her husband, an Army officer assigned to the Pentagon.

Discussion Questions

- 1.) The author describes the Army as the “other woman.” What does she mean by that?
- 2.) Has reading “Army Wives” increased your awareness or changed your opinion of Army life? What were you most surprised to learn?
- 3.) In the book, members of the military community are portrayed as supportive, but also judgmental. Discuss how this plays out in the lives of the characters.
- 4.) In the book, the wives wield their own power. What kind of impact can the wives have on their husbands’ careers?
- 5.) Andrea Lynne and Rita are Army wives at the same post. Why are their lives so different from each other and why is it unlikely their paths would cross?
- 6.) Rita puts wives into categories based on personality traits. Which group do you most identify with, if any?
- 7.) Should Rita have told Brian about the details of her girls’ night out?
- 8.) How do the women change or evolve throughout the book? Can you relate to any of their predicaments? Do any of the women remind you of yourself or someone you know?
- 9.) What do you think of the book’s subtitle, *The Unwritten Code of Military Marriage*? What does the “unwritten code” mean?
- 10.) After losing the love of her life, is it possible for Andrea Lynne, or anyone, to find that kind of love again?
- 11.) Is Andrea Lynne an admirable or self-absorbed figure in this book?



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12.) Could anything have saved Gary Shane from himself? Discuss how Delores and Ski handled their loss individually and as a couple.

13.) We learn from the experiences of others. Discuss any lessons from the book you can apply to your own life.

14.) Why did Rita feel different and excluded from the officers' wives at Military Spouse Day? Could she have done anything to remedy the situation? Rita felt the women prejudged her. Did she prejudice them as well?

15.) What do you think happened between Andrea and Brandon that last night?

16.) "To thine own self be true" was a motto Andrea Lynne had painted on a cabinet in her home. How does this saying play out in the lives of the main characters?

17.) After her husband's death, Andrea Lynne finds herself separated from her old life and identity as an Army wife. What is your reaction to her dilemma and the choices she makes?

18.) Why would a husband murder the mother of his children? Do you agree with the Pentagon's assessment of the Fort Bragg Army wife murders?

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