

Discussion Guide With all My Heart

1. In Chapter One, Charlie tells Pete that he's ready for adventure, and Pete offers insights by sharing stories of his youthful exploits. What is Pete's current situation? Did the choices he made help or hurt him? What advice would you give Charlie and Pete? What counsel would you give to your younger self?
2. We tend to think of women on the frontier as only wearing long skirts and corsets, but plenty of ladies wore pants, shirts, and boots as they worked their farms, panned for gold, and broke horses. How would you describe Lizzy's attitude and behavior? Do you think Charlie would have been as intimidated by Lizzy had she worn more traditional clothing?
3. In Chapter 7, Pete confesses to God that he loves Singing Bird. What issues from her past make it difficult for her to return his feelings?
4. Pete (Chapter 1) and Singing Bird (Chapter 16) have loneliness in common. What other issues SHOULD draw them together? Why do you think they constantly put barriers between each other?
5. The cattle drive in Chapter 14 shows the differences in experience and capabilities among those on the route. Who are the natural leaders? How do the men react to Lizzie's talent on the trail? What is Charlie's reaction to discovering he's not as qualified as he thought?
6. In what ways do Rachel, Singing Bird, and Delphina support and help each other? Do you have a support group of friends or family? What is your role?
7. In Chapter 18, we discover that Lizzy's brothers often called her an "odd bird" and that she never felt like she fit in anywhere. How does living on the frontier allow her to discover her place in the world?
8. Even if Lizzy had the money, she needed to be married to get the land she wanted to purchase in Chapter 20. What do you think was the intention of the law? Did it help or hurt women on the frontier? How were women expected to support themselves under Missouri's 1849 laws?
9. The only legal exception that would allow Singing Bird to remain when the government threatens to move her people out of the area is that she marries a white man. How could this type of law potentially break up an extended family? How could it potentially change Native American Culture?
10. In Chapter 23, Rachel realizes that for the entirety of Singing Bird's life, the woman was constantly thrust into situations that were not her choice and expected to adapt. Rachel becomes the first person to ask Singing Bird what she wants. What does Singing Bird choose first, and why does she choose it? How does Singing Bird's first choice lead to other significant changes in her life?
11. Delphina's new house is more than a simple shelter. What decorative details let Delphina know her friends loved and understood her? How does the gift of a home on the Shankel property simultaneously protect Delphina and honor her independence?
12. What is Lizzy's reaction to seeing her Mama and Papa again? What is Mama's response to seeing Lizzy "as she is" in Chapter 25? How does this, and that Lizzy wears her mother's wedding dress, strengthen their relationship?