In Farleigh Field: A Novel of World War II by Rhys Bowen

World War II arrives at the ancestral home of Lord Westerham and his five daughters when a soldier with a failed parachute falls to his death on the estate and MI5 operative and family friend Ben Cresswell is covertly tasked with investigating at the same time one of the daughters takes a secret job at Bletchley Park.

Why you’ll like it: Historical fiction. Suspenseful. Intricately plotted.

About the Author: Rhys Bowen was born Janet Quin-Harkin in 1941 in Bath, England. She earned her bachelors degree from the University of London. She took a job working for a textbook company developing reading texts before writing her own books. Her first picture book - Peter Penny’s Dance - was published in 1976 and changed her career to children’s book author. She wrote the young adult historical novels Madam Sarah and Fool’s Gold. She then moved on to writing mystery novels which included her Constable Evans series. Her book Royal Blood made the New York Times Bestseller list. (Bowker Author Biography)

Questions for Discussion

1. How does author Rhys Bowen portray the early 1940s in England – the war effort sagging, the many sacrifices required, and the ever-present fear of German invasion? Is her portrait similar to, or consistent with, other works you’ve read (or watched) about the era?

2. Talk about the rumor of the Ring, the Nazi sympathizers within the upper ranks of society. What does the author have to say in her author’s notes about the historical authenticity of the group?

3. Most of the novel is told through the alternating perspectives of Pam and Ben. Occasionally, however, the author shifts to secondary characters. Why might she have done so? How do those shifts add to your understanding of the story?

4. Talk about Lord Westerham’s five daughters, how they differ from one another and how they are similar. Aside from Pamela, is there another sister or two you admire...or whom you particularly disliked? Dido, for instance? What about Margot’s story: how engaged were you with her plight in France?

5. How much had you known before reading this novel about the work, especially of women code-breakers, at Bletchley Park. Have you watched the BBC series?

6. Were you surprised by the revelation about the dead parachutist at the end? Did you see it coming? Does it make sense?

7. Also, what about the traitor and assassination plot Ben has been investigating? Is that plot well-developed and were you caught up in the suspense?
8. Talk about the way Pamela and Ben are forced to maneuver around the secrets they carry but cannot share. There are a few mishaps, as well as a bit of humor. How hard would it be for you to maintain such secrecy in your own life?

9. In all, does this book deliver the goods in terms of mystery and suspense?

(Questions provided by LitLovers)

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