

# ***The Bomber Jacket***

## **Discussion Guide for Book Clubs**

*The Bomber Jacket* takes place in two time periods and tells two stories: the story of Beth, an American college student in 1997, and Robbie, the college professor she meets in Scotland; and of Americans Henry and Gretchen and their Scottish friends Colin and Fiona during World War II. But *The Bomber Jacket* is also a story of devastating heartbreak, soul-wrenching loss as well as lies and secrets--secrets that transcend time and compel Beth's obsessive search for the RAF pilot who haunts her dreams.

### **1997: Beth and Robbie**

The main characters in Beth's story are her grandparents, Henry and Naomi, and Robbie, the young Scottish professor. Minor but important characters are Iain, the Canadian college student; Bertie, the host of the hostel on Skye; Mrs. Gordon (Colin's sister Mairi) and her daughter Mrs. McIntyre at the Achiltibuie B&B.

1. Which of the main and minor characters are your favorite? Why? Can you give specific examples of how each of them influenced Beth's decisions and choices during her search for the bomber pilot as well as her reaction to the devastating truth her grandfather reveals to her in Part 3?
2. Beth and Robbie had a complicated relationship, made more challenging by their roles as student and professor. What do you think of her decision to choose between Robbie and Colin? Did Robbie violate the college's code of conduct in his relationship with Beth?
3. Beth is "haunted" by Colin, first in her dreams, then in her days in Scotland. Was her growing ability to sense his presence, hear his voice, then actually see him written in a way that was believable? How would you react if you had those kinds of dreams of visions?
4. Beth had a troubled relationship with her grandmother, Naomi. Now that you know the story of why Naomi was so angry, does that explain her behavior? Make you feel empathy for Naomi?
5. What was your "emotional relationship" with Beth? Did you care about her? Like her? Find her unstable or too unpredictable? Want a different ending for her?

## 1939-1945: Henry, Gretchen, Colin and Fiona

The four friends are the main characters in this section of the book, but it is really the story of Henry, Gretchen and Colin. Fiona plays an important role as Gretchen's friend who's secretly in love with Henry, but we do not hear her thoughts.

1. How did the friendship between and among the four friends impact their willingness to be honest about their feelings? Would things have worked out differently or with less heartbreak if each of them had been truthful from the beginning?
2. In what ways were their relationships impacted by living in the midst of a war? Do people live more recklessly or impulsively when faced with death and destruction and a completely uncertain future?
3. Whose relationship were you "rooting for?" Henry and Gretchen? Gretchen and Colin? Fiona and Henry? Why? Were you surprised at how their relationships worked out?
4. What was your reaction to Henry's claiming Gretchen and Colin's daughter as his own? What about his decision to first ask Fiona and then Naomi to marry him? In what ways did his decisions impact his life in positive and negative ways?

## General questions

1. What was the most unexpected event in the book? How did you react to it?
2. What was your overall impression of the story? The writing style?
3. If you could change anything about the story, what would it be? Why?
4. If you could ask the writer anything, what would that be?

If you are interested in the backstory of how *The Bomber Jacket* came to be, read *The Story of a Book: The Bomber Jacket from First Page to Finally, Published!* on the author's website: <https://www.kmkingauthor.com>