

Discussion Questions for *Running before the Prairie Wind* by Anne Ipsen

Here are some suggestions for a discussion about *Running before the Prairie Wind*. If it is not practical to address all of them in one meeting, you could pick one or two of them beforehand to help discussants to prepare.

1. Southwestern Minnesota in the 1890's is an important backdrop for the story book. Describe 1-2 two scenes or incidents that you found particularly interesting or new to you.
2. The story has two underlying themes: the damage caused by not talking about the past (buried memories) and honoring heritage while living in another culture (balancing two cultures). Pick one of these themes that relates most to your own experience.
3. Karen is sometimes homesick for her family, give some examples. Like many adolescent girls she had a difficult time with her mother; how does that experience help her deal with her own children and the Karen-Girls?
4. There are several sub-characters that all have personal histories and stories. Describe one of these characters and his or her part in the overall theme.
5. Karen's growing depression comes from not talking about the tragic events of the past. These events are only gradually revealed to the reader in flashbacks. Are these flashbacks presented in an interesting manner or are they confusing? Discuss alternative methods of handling the plot.
6. Questions for those who have **not** read the prequel *Karen from the Mill*: pick a main character and discuss that person's "backstory" and how it is revealed. Did this book make you want to read the prequel?
7. Questions for those who **did** read *Karen from the Mill* first: Does "knowing" more about the characters and incidents from the earlier book enrich your involvement in the new story? Are these references a good reminder or repetitious?

I am always interested to receive comments from readers about my work. Did you find these questions useful? Do you have others to suggest? For more information, visit my website: www.anneipsen.com and email me your comments by using the "Contact" menu to "write the author."