

Discussion questions for
Unbroken by Jamie Lisa Forbes

If Huckleberry Finn is the standard male hero in American literature, who is the standard heroine? Do Meg and Gwen fit the mold of these heroines or do they represent a different statement about the lives of American women?

Early in the novel, Meg chooses to remain with her employer, Mather, despite deplorable conditions. Later, Gwen, having left the Swan family ranch, chooses to return. Were these choices the “right” choices for each of these characters?

Nature in American literature is frequently escapist, that is, an escape and a refuge from the human world. Can it be said of the characters in this novel that they live “escapist” lives? Could any of these characters live in the “real” world?

Landscape and the forces of Nature play a big part in the novel. Do you think the author’s descriptions gave you a feel for the way both influenced and molded the characters?

The Bruce Roseland poem, *Prairie Prayer*, prefacing the novel suggests that the constant and unrelenting rhythms of ranch life will ultimately reveal “the character that lies within.” As the ranching seasons progress in the novel, do they *uncover* the “character that lies within” or, do they *create* the “character that lies within”? What is the character that ultimately resides within Gwen, Meg, John, Will, Nick and Mather? Are those characters revealed or created?