

Group Discussion Questions for *Ransome's Honor*

by Kaye Dacus

1. Given the title of this book, what is your definition of *honor*? How is the concept of honor exhibited in the book—by Julia, by William, by other characters?
2. Before the war with France ended (temporarily) in 1814, England had been in a constant state of war with France (and Spain and other countries, including the United States) since 1793, with only a brief lull during the Peace of Amiens (March 1802–May 1803). What changes do you think were happening in England in 1814 due to the onset of peace after more than twenty years, and how was that depicted in the book? How did the twenty years of war shape the characters and their lives in this story?
3. What expectations did you have when you began reading the book? Were your expectations met? Were you disappointed with anything in the story?
4. What did you learn about the time period that you didn't know before reading this book? What did you learn about how people lived/what life might have been like? Was there anything you didn't understand (terms, social customs)? Was there anything you expected to see but didn't?
5. In the prologue, after William disappoints Julia by not proposing to her, Julia determines that she'll never forgive him. Have you ever said or thought that about someone who's hurt you? How does that kind of situation usually turn out?
6. Sir Drake Pembroke is Julia's first cousin (his father and her mother were brother and sister). What do you think of the historic custom of cousins marrying?
7. The idea of inheritance is brought up early in the story when Lady Pembroke tells Sir Drake that Julia will inherit all her father's wealth and property. How does this differ from other historicals/Regencies you've read? What did you think of Julia's decision to offer to let William become her father's heir in exchange for marrying her—even when she thought they'd be getting an annulment?
8. Much of the conflict surrounding Julia, William, Sir Drake, and Julia's aunts is driven by the rumor mill in Portsmouth. What was the importance of reputation in the early 19th Century? How does the idea of protecting one's reputation tie in with the concept of honor?
9. At "nine-and-twenty" years old, Julia is much older than a typical heroine in a historical romance novel. How important was her age to the story? What did you think about reading a historical romance with a heroine who's almost thirty?

10. Julia Witherington is a driven, independent woman. Did she seem too modern for the time period, or was she believable? What did you like about Julia? What did you not like about Julia? What would you have changed about her?

11. For William Ransome, duty, honor, and loyalty are the tenets he holds dear. Does he put too much emphasis on them and not enough on family? What did you like about William? What did you not like about William? What would you have changed about him?

12. What are your thoughts on Sir Drake Pembroke? Lady Pembroke? Lady MacDougall?

13. When William first accepted Julia's proposal as a "business arrangement," what did you think of his acceptance? Was he acting honorably?

14. Charlotte is keeping a pretty big secret from her family. What problems do you foresee in her future if she does what she's planning and runs away to Jamaica to marry her secret fiancé? Do you think Julia was right not to say anything to Charlotte about the letter?

15. When Susan discovers she is pregnant, it at first delights and then saddens Julia. Why was Julia saddened by her friend's good news? Did Collin make the right decision (to leave the Royal Navy)? What did William learn from his friend's action?

16. Julia, in her note to Susan, admitted she was most likely "the grandest fool in the world" for going to Marchwood with Lady MacDougall. What do you think of Julia's decision to go visit the estate where her mother grew up? Was that out of character with what you learned about Julia in the rest of the book?

17. After William has gone to retrieve Julia from Marchwood, Lady Dalrymple comes by and admits that she started her own false rumors in an effort to head off the lies Lady Pembroke intended to spread. Do you think Lady Dalrymple acted wisely? What might be the repercussions of the rumor Lady Dalrymple spread (that Sir Drake had Julia drugged and then "absconded with her when she was too weak to resist")? Was there a way Lady Dalrymple could have handled the situation without telling lies herself?

18. What was your reaction in the wedding scene when, at the end of the chapter, someone objects to the wedding and stops it? Who did you think it was? Were you happy with the way it turned out?

19. At the end of the novel, William realizes "he would walk away from his crew, forsake his duty, and even sacrifice his own honor to provide for and protect Julia. Love demanded nothing less." Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Did William's understanding of honor change in the course of the book? Did yours?

20. Read Romans 8:14–17. How is the picture of God's adopting us as His children, as His heirs, exemplified in this story?