

## Group Discussion Questions for *Ransome's Crossing*

by Kaye Dacus

1. What expectations did you have when you began reading the book? Were your expectations met? Were you disappointed with anything in the story?
2. 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?
3. In this story, there are many people at cross-purposes with each other. In what ways did you see this happening and with which characters?
4. In the prologue, William reminds Charlotte that, in the nineteenth century, women could not join the military. We know from history, there were very few jobs women could hold and still maintain a good reputation. What are some of the other restrictions women had to live with back then? What are some of the things you do in your twenty-first century life that you wouldn't have been allowed to do in 1814?
5. Charlotte, we learn, has been carrying on a secret correspondence and romantic relationship with someone of whom her family does not approve. Have you ever done something like that? Were you more reasonable and logical about it than Charlotte is in this book? Or would you have been willing to put yourself in a dangerous situation to be with the person you were in love with? Was there a good reason for the family's disapproval?
6. Charlotte managed to stay disguised and live (and work) aboard ship for about six weeks. From what you learned about life aboard an early nineteenth-century naval vessel in this story, would you have been able to survive that long?
7. In this book, Charlotte finds herself in jeopardy several times. Before the modern era, it wasn't unusual for women to find themselves at the mercy of men around them—especially in caste-based social systems like England's. How did you feel when Lord Rotheram attacked her? What about when Charlotte stood up to Kent her first night on *Audacious*?
8. Ned, Julia, and William all worry about what would happen to Ned's and William's careers, to the Ransome family, and to Charlotte herself if it's discovered that she spent more than a month "living with" the other midshipmen aboard *Audacious*. What was the importance of reputation in the early 19th Century? How does integrity tie in with reputation?
9. In *Ransome's Honor*, Julia was considered an old maid at twenty-nine years old, though she fell in love with William when she was very young and would have married

him at seventeen if he'd asked. In *Ransome's Crossing*, Charlotte is seventeen and has been secretly engaged for many months—and “in love” with Henry Winchester since she was fifteen. Do you think age is an important factor when making wise choices about love and marriage?

10. Charlotte Ransome is a driven, headstrong young woman. Did it seem that she fit in as a midshipman too easily once she was aboard ship? What did you like about Charlotte? What did you not like about Charlotte? What would you have changed about her?

11. Ned Cochrane lives with the fear and guilt of a tragedy he precipitated when he was a callow young man. What does this fear do to him? Was he right in not wanting to take command because he'd ordered men to their deaths in the past? What did you like about Ned? What did you not like about Ned? What would you have changed about him?

12. Julia begins her marriage with William by both trying to be the “perfect” wife (not contradicting William but always agreeing with him, especially once aboard *Alexandra*) and by trying to keep herself aloof, to keep herself from becoming dependent on him. Why were these bad ideas?

13. Charlotte must become part of the community aboard *Audacious*. What did you think of some of her shipmates: Captain Parker and Lieutenant Howe? Hamilton and Martin? Kent and his mates?

14. Charlotte has several run-ins with Kent and his cronies during her time on *Audacious*. Do you think she was right to not take her suspicions to the first lieutenant (the officer who was in charge of maintaining discipline aboard a Royal Navy ship) after her sea chest was rummaged through or after she was tripped going down the stairs?

15. Before leaving Portsmouth, William and Julia learn that Lord Rotheram has pressed charges against Charlotte for assaulting him. Based on your knowledge of the era, and how women and those of lower social classes (those without titles or land) were viewed, do you think Charlotte would have been treated fairly if she'd stayed in England and had to face the legal charges against her?

16. What do you think of Charlotte's decision to run away to marry Henry Winchester? Especially with everything that was being offered to her in England by Lady Dalrymple and the Fairfaxes? Which would you have chosen?

17. After Ned reveals Charlotte's identity to Julia, Julia keeps the information to herself rather than telling William. Why do you think Julia feared to tell him? What do you think would have happened if she had told him about Charlotte when they were still docked in Madeira? Did William forgive Julia and Charlotte too easily?

18. After Ned takes command of *Audacious*, he looks through the prayer book and reads the passage from Luke about the ten lepers whom Jesus healed—and only one came back to thank Jesus. Ned is surprised by Jesus telling the man his faith had made him

whole. Ned doesn't understand this statement—in his literal mind, it wasn't the man's faith but Jesus who made the man whole. What do you think "your faith has made you whole" means?

19. William talks to Julia about God's steadfastness and faithfulness to His children a couple of times. At one point, he says, "But if you have difficulty putting your faith in me and coming to rely on me, when I am here with you, you can see how much more difficult it is to let go of doubt and rely completely on God." Do you experience this same difficulty—letting go of doubts and relying completely on God? Have there been times in your life when you've had to rely solely on God to get you through something?

20. Read Deuteronomy 4:29–31. How is the picture of God's faithfulness and steadfastness exemplified in this story?