

Book Club Discussion Questions

1. Andi blames herself for the deaths of her platoon members. Have you ever experienced a situation, totally out of your control, the results of which you blamed yourself? Were you able to move on? How?
2. Scores of veterans return home, suffering from the effects of their service, and many are diagnosed with PTSD. Andi attended therapy sessions in her last few weeks before leaving the Navy but chose not to continue them once she was home, instead, facing her fears and doubts on her own. She hinted to her mother that she even contemplated suicide as many vets do. How can we as a nation help returning vets successfully deal with things that happened during their service and let them know that they do not need to face things on their own?
3. Like so many American small towns, Buffalo Springs is the victim of progress. Have you seen or visited other towns in this situation? What caused their collapse and perhaps ultimate demise? How successful were they at making a comeback? What can be learned from their experience?
4. Andi is determined to save her town. True to her nature, she puts all of her energy into finding ways to revive the failing community. What is her motivating force? Why is it so vital to her well-being that the town bounces back? How does the state of the town and its fate mirror her own life? In what ways is she projecting her own situation, feelings, fears, and sense of survival onto the town?
5. Belonging is one of the five essential needs as taught by psychologist Abraham Maslow. According to his Hierarchy of Needs, friendship, intimacy, family, and a sense of connection are some of the central prerequisites for happiness and are necessary components of life which must be obtained before we can reach our full potential as human beings. How is Andi the perfect example of this teaching?
6. Buffalo River National Park is a real park in the Ozarks. For both Andi and Wade, it is a “safe” place where they can spend time away from the town to think or just “be.” Do you believe that everyone needs a place where they can just “be”? What is your safe place where you can get away and contemplate life?
7. Wade, an intelligent, well-educated man, becomes mayor under false pretenses, risking everything he has worked for throughout his life. How could this happen? What examples can you give of how the mighty have fallen and why?
8. Andi’s attitude toward God changed with the loss of her platoon. She alternated between blaming God and doubting his existence. Wade, on the other hand, grew closer to God after suffering loss. Both were natural responses. Why do you think this is the case?

9. Buffalo Springs faces the same drug epidemic that so many American small towns are facing. Wade says the town's response is, "The usual" with DARE in the elementary school, police visits to the middle-high school warning about the dangers of drugs, and nightly patrols of the streets and alleys. Is this enough? What do you think towns should be doing to combat this growing problem?

10. Upon returning home from the Navy, Andi decides to open a bakery. The two career choices seem diametrically opposed, leading Wade to ask, "Is this going to be enough for you?" Andi assures him it will be. How has Andi changed and grown since she first came to town to allow her to be so positive that this is what she wants and needs? What will owning the bakery do for her mentally and emotionally? Do you think it will be enough? How and why?

Bonus: There is great potential for Buffalo Springs as a town and for these characters to be featured in a series. What do you see happening next?