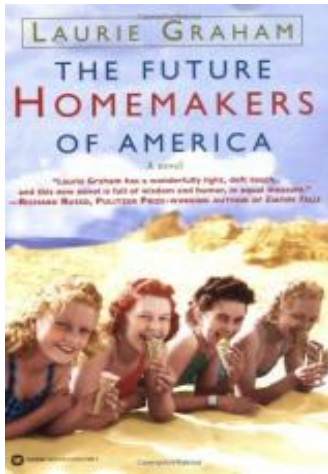

The Future Homemakers of America: A Novel

by Laurie Graham



About the Book

Six Women...

Their Loves, Laughter, and Lifelong Friendship

For five American Air Force wives, Norfolk, England, in 1952 is a long way from home. But Peggy Dewey and her friends are determined to make the most of their overseas mission. While their husbands patrol the skies in F-84 fighters, the high-spirited group of military wives and young moms staves off homesickness by clipping coupons, trading gossip, and going to London to see Princess Elizabeth "get coronated." Over a stick of Juicy Fruit, brass polisher Audrey Rudman, good-time girl Lois Moon, alcohol-loving Gayle Jackson, "Pie Crust Queen" Betty Gillis, and the ever reliable Peggy meet a scrappy Englishwoman named Kath Pharaoh and a lasting friendship is forged. Through marriage and divorce, separations and reunions, the gang will try to hold fast to one another?in a story that takes us to the heart of female friendship-and reveals the secret of the perfect Three Color Refrigerator Cake.

Discussion Guide

1. What role does the "homemaker" play in this book? What does homemaker mean to you? How would you or someone you know who is a homemaker relate to the homemakers in this book? Has the concept/role of a homemaker changed dramatically since the 1950's and 1960's, and if so, how? Do you think a career woman of today can also be a homemaker?
2. Why do you think the author decided to begin her book with an historical event, the death of King George VI? What sort of impact does this news have on the wives? What parallels, if any, do you see between this event in history and the point in these women's lives?
3. Do you see differences between the Englishwoman Kath Pharaoh and the American ladies? Are there any instances of

culture clash, despite their friendship? Have you ever experienced culture clash? If so, discuss your experience.

4. Do you believe that life as the wife of an officer on a base has changed over the decades? What are the advantages and disadvantages of being an officer's wife on a military base? What sort of community does this provide? How does life in this type of community compare to other types of communities?

5. The author includes character-specific recipes throughout the novel. What do they say about the individual characters? What do your favorite recipes say about you? Did you try any of these recipes at home?

6. Do you think the historical references included in the novel add texture, or did you find them distracting? How do these historical events affect these characters? What events in history have dramatically affected your life?

7. There is more than one marriage in this book that does not turn out the way you would expect. Do you feel this realistically reflects what can occur in life? Explain examples either from your own life or that of a friend's of how a marriage evolved unexpectedly.

8. What is the meaning of friendship, especially friendship between women? What are these characters willing to do for friendship? How important are women friends to you? Describe the importance, if any, that women friends play in your life. What do you learn from these friendships? Did you ever become close to someone whom you'd normally never have befriended, but due to unexpected circumstances you were brought together? If so, did this friendship endure or fall by the wayside?

Author Bio

LAURIE GRAHAM, I was born in 1947, so my earliest memories are of post-war Britain, a grey place of bombed buildings and rationed food. I was five years old before I tasted candy, nearer ten years old before I rode in a car. By the 60s it was a very different story. Britain was swinging and I did my best to join in, though to be honest I was never much of a swinger. I went to college, where sex, drugs and rock and roll passed me by and so too did education. I had no idea I was going to be a writer. I married, produced a baby a year for four years and played at Earth Mother until I got my long overdue wake-up call. I was in my mid-thirties with a failing marriage, four mouths to feed and no career. I began writing out of sheer desperation.

It took me five years to get my lucky break ? with Cosmopolitan magazine, and then soon afterwards with a publishing house so venerable it had a photo of Virginia Woolf on its wall. It wasn't all plain sailing though. My marriage did end, and my writing career has sometimes been storm tossed, sometimes in the doldrums, but to continue the metaphor, I'm now in calmer waters. Those four little mouths are old enough to feed themselves, I have made a very happy second marriage, and I'm now able to write the books I really want to write.

Three years ago I realised a lifelong ambition and moved to Italy, to the fabled city of Venice, where, give or take a few TV antennae, the view from my office window hasn't changed in 500 years. It is the ultimate antidote to that chilly utilitarian backdrop of my childhood.

Critical Praise

"My 'leave-the-phone-off-the-hook' book of the year? Wonderful."

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