

***The Hope Before Us* by Elyse Larson**
Reading Group Guide

1. World War II became a springboard of change for women seeking equal treatment in the workplace. Why do you think this happened? What changes for working women do you appreciate? What changes do you regret?
2. After watching their parents, Marge and Em desired a career over marriage. What from your childhood has most influenced your attitude toward marriage and career? If you have children, what kind of messages are you sending to them about marriage and career?
3. Em had decided she never could marry a man who didn't share her Christian faith, yet she kept seeing Bob. How important to a marriage is agreement in faith? Why?
4. Marge felt she could not be a physician and be a good wife and mother at the same time. Em argues that she could. What do you think? What are the reasons for your opinion?
5. Marge speculates that the hardships of ranch life during the Depression had made her stronger. Have hard times strengthened or weakened you? Why do you think this is so?
6. Racial segregation was practiced during World War II in the armed forces, as well as at home. Black servicemen were kept in separate regiments, quarters, and housing. Japanese Americans were confined to internment camps at home, which Em explains when she introduces Tom Kagawa to Hubert and Estelle. What happened as a result of the war to diminish racial intolerance? What still needs to be done?
7. Em possessed a strong "can do" attitude and confidence in herself. What other trait in Em's makeup made this attitude risky? Name some personality and character traits that you consider good. What are their negative aspects? What attitude would make each trait more valuable?
8. Some Christians believe, as David Lewellyn did, that they should never bear arms against an enemy. What does the Bible say about bearing arms and passive resistance? Do the same commandments apply to nations as to individuals? Can a nation be a Christian nation?
9. Marge went into a serious depression when she lost David. What, besides grief, contributed to Marge's debilitating depression? What might she have done differently to avoid the emotional crash? Can a person trust God and still be depressed? What contributed to Marge's recovery?
10. What made Em willing to help an enemy? What made Marge willing to help the same enemy? How do their reactions to Werner's plea for help differ? If you were in the same situation, would your reaction be more like Em's reaction or more like Marge's?
11. Marge and Em were raised in a Christian family. How did Marge's faith help her during the war? How did Em's faith help her? How did each woman's faith change and grow?
12. During World War II, everyone wanted peace and a better world for their children. That was the hope before them. Yet in some ways the "greatest generation," who won the world's worst war, failed their children. Can you name some of the good things that our culture has lost? How do you think this happened? What would you like to see different? What is the hope before you? What will you do to achieve it?