

Book of the Week

***The Four Winds* by Kristen Hannah**

Book Review by Libba Andrews

There is so much to say about *The Four Winds*. It is real life, it is heartbreaking, it is relatable and certainly depressing. But is so much more. It is a story of a mother's love, unwavering courage, and an unyielding spirit and a centered heart.

The Four Winds is historical fiction and set in 1930's Texas. Life was grand, until...the stock market crashed. There was a severe never-ending drought, blazing heat, burning winds, and dust storms so horrendous you could taste the dust. The rains never came. Mother Nature left nothing to be harvested. The economy collapsed.

Meet Elsa Martinelli, one of three girls born into a wealthy family. As a child she suffered from rheumatic fever, was forced to live a sheltered life and was made to feel as though she would never be as good, as smart, or as pretty as her sisters. Elsa enjoyed reading, often losing herself in the stories. She became restless and wanted more for her life.

Elsa gets a new life, a new and loving family, a husband, and children of her own. But it is life during the Great Depression. Under the cloak of darkness her husband leaves her and the children. The farm she lives on with her in-laws is in peril. She faces a difficult choice. Should she stay with her in-laws and hope for rain? Should she take her children and move to California in hopes of a better life?

She takes the children and moves to California. What she discovers is unrelenting poverty, wretched living conditions, and people starving. She comes face to face with slave-like working conditions, prejudices and injustices. But Elsa is resilient, hardworking, strong, and courageous. She is good and kind and has a heart of gold. There is nothing Elsa will not do for her two children.

This story is littered with hardships, real life hardships. But in the end and upon reflection, what shines through most for me is the power and spirit of the human heart.

