


LORI HANDELAND

Just Once

"A heartwrenching, deeply complex tale"

Library Journal Starred Review of *The Lone Warrior*

A woman with her hair in a bun, wearing a white knitted poncho, sits on a wooden pier. She is looking out over a calm body of water towards a range of mountains under a dramatic, cloudy sky at sunset or sunrise. The scene is captured in a cinematic style with soft lighting.

A marriage is forever . . . isn't it?

Just Once Book Club Discussion Questions

These discussion questions are meant for readers who have finished reading *Just Once* as they may contain spoilers.

1. *Just Once* revolves around two women who love the same man. Would you describe the relationship among Frankie and Hannah and Charley as a love triangle?
2. The plot of *Just Once* unfolds in chapters alternating between the present and Charley's past with Frankie and with Hannah. Why do you think the author chose to reveal the characters' intertwining stories in that way?
3. Being forgotten by someone you love is a common fear provoked by a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease. While *Just Once* deals with a different diagnosis, the results of memory loss are very similar. What inspiration might people with a parent or spouse afflicted with memory loss find in Hannah's journey to acceptance and her final sacrifice?
4. Frankie and Charley shared the passion and conviction of needing to record the world through a camera, "but where Frankie saw light and color, contrast and composition – the way the world came together – Charley saw how the world came apart. What passion do you have that is shared by someone else in a different way? How does that impact your feelings about that passion?
5. A story of love and forgiveness, *Just Once* is driven by loss and grief. How does the novel shed light on the power of losing a loved one to define the course of a marriage—for better or for worse?
6. Do you think that Charley left Frankie for her own good or for his?
7. How does the relationship between Hannah and Heath reveal Hannah's key characteristics? What do we learn from the difference between the way she dealt with Heath's illness and death and Charley's illness and death?
8. At various points in *Just Once*, the speaker identifies Charley as Her Charley, referring both to Frankie and Hannah. How does the term Her Charley highlight the relationships Charley had with each woman?

9. Frankie was desperate to find beauty with her camera and Charley found it difficult to respect that. How are beauty and reality opposing forces? Do you tend to look more for beauty or reality in the world?
10. Even though it was difficult to agree to allow Charley to chronicle Heath's death, Hannah knew it was important to do so. Charley said, "Words are easy for someone to read or hear and forget about later. But a picture – a lot of pictures – those stay with people." What images have had that impact on your life? Would the effect have been different if that image had been described with words rather than through a picture?
11. The connection that Hannah and Frankie formed was unique but powerful. How important is it to have unique friendships or connections with people beyond those in our inner circle?
12. Irene was Frankie's only close friend. She was loyal to Frankie, nearly to a fault. What characteristics are most important to you in your best friend?
13. How did you feel about Hannah in the beginning of *Just Once*? Did that feeling change as the events unfolded?
14. What pivotal quote or scene from the novel was the most memorable for you?
15. Would you call the ending of *Just Once* "happy"?
16. If you read the deleted scenes, do you think the author should have deleted those scenes or left them in and why?
17. If you could ask Lori Handeland one question about this book, what would you ask and why?