

Book Group Guide for *Public Battles, Private Wars*

- Fenley Down is a fictional pit village, although other locations mentioned in the novel are real. Why do you think the author chose to create a town rather than set the story in a real place?
- The story is set against the backdrop of the 1984/85 Miners' Strike. How much do you feel the world has altered in 30 years, particularly for women?
- Was the year long strike worth the hardship given the miners eventual defeat?
- What do Mandy and Ruth have in common?
- Food is important to Mandy and Ruth. What does their relationship to food and eating reveal about them?
- Is Mandy a socialist?
- Is Ruth a feminist? Is Mandy?
- Why do you think Ruth is so damaged?
- Is Doreen to blame for Mandy's low self-esteem?
- How do you think Mandy's life would have differed had her father not died when she was a teenager?
- Do you feel any sympathy for Rob at the end of the novel?
- Why do you think the Braithwaites are so keen to keep Dan's reason for leaving the army secret?
- Why are Mandy and Dan drawn to each other?
- Do you think Mandy loves Dan?
- What do you think the future holds for Dan at the end of the novel?
- The story opens with a quote from Mandy's dad in which he says that you can often find the best of yourself during the strangest times and in the strangest places. Do you think he's right? Are there any examples from your own experience?