

The *Islands Of Rage And Hope* Reader's Group Discussion Guide

by Rachel Mintel

Welcome to the Reader's Group Guide for John Ringo's third installment in the Black Tide Rising series, *Islands of Rage and Hope*. In this volume, Wolf Squadron takes to the Atlantic to avoid the chaos and discovers other refugees, banding together to keep humanity alive. Wolf Squadron is about to embark on a journey to cross the Atlantic, rescuing survivors and salvaging ships as they make their way towards Guantanamo Bay in an effort to produce more of the vaccine.

1. *Islands of Rage and Hope* opens with Sergeant Sheila Hoag and Lieutenant Colonel Craig Hamilton dealing with the breakout of the virus at a Navy base, and Hamilton discusses how choice is a terrible thing: every choice is stress, and stress is not cumulative, it is multiplicative. Do you agree with this rather dark philosophy? Why?
2. Hoag, despite her conscience, is ordered by her gunnery sergeant to leave him and his passenger behind, and she complies, though not without suffering from survivor's guilt. Hamilton tells Hoag, who is contemplating suicide, "In a situation of death before dishonor, eventually all you have are the dead and the dishonored." Did Hoag make the right choice? In the end, is the phrase "death before dishonor" one that you believe in?
3. Walker tells Sophia that the most important factor in maintaining one's sanity in a survival situation is something to hold onto, something to do and take care of and cherish. Walker had a knot record, Faith had a stuffed bear, and the two Marines they found clung to their duty and took care of their infected lieutenant. Are any of these unhealthy or healthy approaches to handling stress and sanity? Where is the line drawn between healthy and unhealthy? Do you have any habits that help you de-stress?
4. Sophia is distressed she's being asked to make vaccines again, and the implications it carries—as Tom put it, "Seawolf the Hero started out working in a clandestine human chop shop." How do you think the members of the squadron will react when that comes out? Will the military reaction be different from the civilian reaction? Is creating more vaccine worth the potential blowback from the squadron?
5. Hamilton tells Faith that she has the combat training of a Marine down pat, but she still needs to learn how to be an officer, and all that entails: meetings, paperwork, and more meetings. Why do you think most of the higher ups are invested in making her a true officer rather than just focusing on clearing areas, which is Faith's most obvious talent?

6. While Faith may be the muscle, Sophia is the brains, which gives her a slight edge in being an officer, but Sophia is willing to try to help Faith through some of the logistics side of it. If you had to pick, which sister is the better officer? What are some of the strengths and weaknesses Sophia and Faith have? Do you think, if the sisters really tried to work together, they could be as formidable as their father?
7. When discussing pregnancy complications, Steve tells Tom, “no children, no future.” How do you think the baby boom is going to go? What kind of generation can be raised that doesn’t know of any pre-Plague life? What kind of complications do you foresee arising?
8. Faith, as a thirteen-year-old second lieutenant, is struggling to be commanding despite the fact that many of her Marines don’t trust her, and Hamilton’s advice is to fake it until you make it. Has there ever been a situation where you’ve done the same? Has this advice worked for you?
9. When Sophia briefs the members of the *Dragon*, she’s rather brusque and blunt, much to the surprise of the members, and she also says that grinding up human spines doesn’t even rank in the top 100 terrible things she’s seen. Do you think it’s bad to be that desensitized to everything, or is it necessary in this world? What are some positives and negatives about being that desensitized?
10. Steve says the ability to overcome cognitive dissonance is the definition of competence in a post-Plague world. Do you agree? Have you ever had any experience with cognitive dissonance?
11. Sophia and Faith comfort Anna after she’s been rescued, as she’s struggling with her role as the strangler in their compartment, and the sisters welcome her to the omerta, and invite her to talk to either of them when she’s ready. Do you think talking through your feelings helps at all, or do you prefer to work them out alone? What could the negative impact of bottling up feelings like that up be in the squadron or the military?
12. After the team rescues Prince Harry, some logistics of larger-scale city rescues come into play—Plan Sisyphus, which requires ten barges, covered in steel, anchored in ports, where refugees could live, safe from infected. Is this feasible? Do you think Wolf Squadron will be able to accomplish it?
13. At the end of *Islands of Rage and Hope*, Faith and Sophia’s team fought their way for eight hours through a hospital to get the gel necessary for the vaccine, and they successfully rescued 4000 submarine crew members and 1000 refugees from London. With this, Steve’s plan to start clearing the land with helos can start. What do you think his first target will be? How do you think his plan will play out?