

## **Those Who Save Us by Jenna Blum**

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**Courtesy of [www.readinggroupguides.com](http://www.readinggroupguides.com)**

- 1.** How is **Those Who Save Us** different from other novels that address the issues surrounding the Holocaust? What new perspectives does it offer?
- 2.** Discuss the novel's title. In what ways do the characters save each other in the novel, and who saves whom? How does Blum play with the concept of being saved, being safe, being a savior?
- 3.** In the beginning, what is Anna's attitude towards the Jewish people of Weimar? Does her attitude change? If so, where does this transformation occur and why?
- 4.** Do you see Anna's beauty as a blessing or a curse? What role does it play in shaping her destiny? How do her looks affect her relationships with Max, Gerhard, the Obersturmführer, Trudy?
- 5.** Why does Mathilde risk her life to feed the Buchenwald prisoners? Why does Anna? Do you think American women would react differently than German women in similar circumstances, and if so, why?
- 7.** Is the Obersturmführer a monster or human? What are his vulnerabilities? To what degree is he a product of his time? If the Obersturmführer had been born in contemporary America, what might he be doing today?
- 8.** Do you think the Obersturmführer has forever affected her ability to love Jack? To love Trudy? What are Anna's real feelings for the Obersturmführer, and what are his true feelings toward Anna and her daughter?
- 9.** Are Trudy's difficulties with her mother caused only by the secrets Anna keeps? If the past had not come between them, what would their relationship have been like? In what ways are Trudy and Anna typical of mothers and daughters everywhere? What parallels can you draw between their relationship and yours with your own mother?
- 10.** How does Trudy learn about shame from Anna? Does Trudy's shame stem solely from her suspicions about her Nazi parentage or from her German heritage as well? How has her shame manifested in her adult lifestyle?

- 11.** Why does Anna keep her silence about the past, even when she has been confronted and deemed a heroine? Is this fair to Trudy? In her position, would you do the same?
- 12.** Why does Rainer read a prepared statement about his aunt's experience and eventual deportation to Auschwitz instead of telling his own story? Why is Rainer so angry with Trudy? Is he angry with her? Do you think his anger is justified?
- 13.** Why does Trudy get involved with Rainer? Is Trudy and Rainer's relationship a healthy one? If Trudy and Rainer's relationship were not affected by their wartime pasts, would it have been happy? Would it have existed at all?
- 14.** What does each of Trudy's interview subjects-Frau Kluge, Rose-Grete Fischer, Rainer, Felix Pfeffer- represent about German actions during the war and how Germans feel in retrospect? What does Trudy learn from her German subjects?
- 15.** At the end of **Those Who Save Us**, the characters' fates are ambiguous; Trudy, for instance, is left in a "vacuum between one part of life ending and another coming to take its place." Why does Blum do this? What statement, if any, is she trying to make? Do you feel that the novel's end is a happy one for Trudy? For Anna? Why or why not? And what do you think has happened to the Obersturmführer?

# # #