

ESCAPING INTO THE NIGHT

Discussion/Essay Questions

- (1) In chapter 1, Halina says, "I was tired of pretending not to care when the guards hit someone with their rifles, tired of pretending not to notice when I heard gunshots in the streets. Wasn't thirteen the age when you were supposed to stop pretending?" How does Halina grow from "pretending" to accepting her reality? How do other characters in the book pretend in order to escape or deal with their reality?
- (2) Discuss Halina's relationships with the various adults in the book: her mother, her father, Georg, and Tante Rosa. What do each of these relationships signify to Halina? How does her relationship to each of these people change as Halina changes?
- (3) The three main characters in the book, Halina, Reuven, and Batya, all have differing notions of faith. Discuss how each of them integrates their faith (or lack thereof) in relationship to the history of the Holocaust and what is happening to them.
- (4) One of the positive aspects of Halina's experience is her relationship with nature and love of the woods. Yet many people who escaped to the forest, like Mrs. Fiozmann, chose to go back to the ghetto because they couldn't take the harsh living conditions? What would you do? How well do you think you would be able to survive in the forest?
- (5) Mr. Moskin says, "There are times to fight and other times where the only thing we can do is to pray?" Do you agree, or not?
- (6) Tante Rosa tells Halina, "We don't talk about the past ... we must live for the present, for each day. At night sometimes, after the girls are asleep, I think about my husband and the time before the forest. But I can't speak of these things. When I see the sun rise in the morning, I put my hand on the trunk of a tree and think only about what I have to do to stay alive for one more day." Why do you think she would say this?
- (7) Was there sexism in the forest? How were the girls and women treated differently from the men? Do you believe this was acceptable? Why or why not?
- (8) Before the food expedition, Batya raises questions about ethics. Do you believe it was ethical for the group to take food and supplies from the surrounding peasant villages? Why or why not?
- (9) Several characters in Escaping into the Night do come back, yet others never do. What do you think of Reuven's insistence on first trying to find his brothers, and later waiting for Halina, after she and Batya don't return from the food expedition?

(10) Just before Halina and Reuven set off to rescue Batya, Reuven says, "My brothers were brave but they were unlucky...if I'm not unlucky, then I have to make myself brave enough to help others, even if I'm not brave." Halina responds by thinking that she wasn't sure she could believe in God, but she could believe in luck. How are bravery, faith, and luck related?

(11) Do you think Halina and Reuven should feel remorse about the German soldier? Why or why not?

(12) What is the significance of the possessions that Halina has with her in the forest? At the end of the book she says, "*Dayenu*. It would have to be enough." Is it enough?