



Reading group questions

1. In the novel, Ingrid and Natalie discover their roots and family they never knew they had. How do you think this discovery would have affected them? How would their perspective of family have changed?
2. Many families were fragmented and dispersed, often across the world, as a result of World War II. Generations later, how do you think this separation has affected families? How has it impacted those who remained in their homelands? How has it influenced the cultural identity of those who left, and their descendants?
3. How do you think Elya's childhood experiences, fleeing the pogroms of Kiev, shaped her as a woman and affected her choices in life?
4. How do you think the idea of family is represented throughout the novel? What does family mean to you?

5. Susie and Marika are best friends throughout the novel, helping each other through highs and lows over many years. Why is Susie's friendship with Marika so important to her? What do you think makes an enduring friendship?
6. Susie and Julius both suffered the loss of their family and home at a young age and were taken in by the Hecker family. How did their responses to their childhood trauma change as they grew from children into adulthood? What are the similarities and differences in the ways they handled it?
7. How have the events in Susie's life shaped her identity? What are the events that have shaped your identity?
8. What do you think drove Georg to take such risks in joining the Resistance and helping Russian POWs and child flak helpers escape from the Nazis? His marriage to Elya was the primary source of protection for his family. What kind of man do you think he was?
9. Leo has mixed heritage: Jewish, Russian and German. What do you think Leo's sense of identity would have been in his childhood, and how would it have changed through the Nazi era of the 1930s, during the war, and after the war with the Soviet occupation? How may this have changed again as he spent decades living away from his homeland? How do you think he felt when he returned to Germany as an old man?

Letters from Berlin

10. How would the events in Leo's life, especially the persecution he suffered as a result of his Jewish heritage and the loss of his family estate have changed him as a person and have shaped his attitudes?
11. What do you think is the legacy left behind by Leo and Susie?