

***The German Ward* by Pip Williams**

Book Club Questions

1. There are recurring references in *The German Ward* to swifts and swallows, birds which are very similar in appearance. What do you think the author is trying to say with this imagery?
2. Tilda remarks that attempting to kill enemy soldiers only to then care for them is 'insane'. Why do you think these codes of warfare were established? And what do you think about the ironies?
3. Tilda makes the decision to euthanise a soldier due to the severity of his injuries and suffering, a decision which Hugo fundamentally disagrees with. What would you have done?
4. Where does power lie among the people in this book? How does it contribute to the story?
5. What role did the attraction between Tilda and Hugo play in their respective experiences of that war? Would they have been better off if they'd never met?
6. What is the role of Alison (Matron Livingstone) in the novel? Antagonist? Ally? Or something else?
7. Iso Rae was an established Australian artist living in France during WW1, but she was denied the opportunity to be an official war artist because of her gender. What stories might have been lost or undermined because of the exclusion of women from the recording of war?
8. Iso Rae is deliberate in the use of light in her artwork, telling Tilda that 'light is brighter when the scene is dark'. How do you think this concept is woven into the novel? What do you consider the 'daubs of light' in this story?
9. Did you notice that while Iso Rae is a significant character, she only directly speaks once, during a scene in her own home? Why might the author have chosen to include her in this way?
10. In this novel, the author has imagined a series of sketches drawn by a real artist. Is it okay to fictionalise the artist's work in this way? What are the risks and what are the benefits?
11. Eva considers integrating an artwork by Iso Rae into her thesis. The piece depicts street cleaners from Africa and China, people who are rarely acknowledged for their roles in WW1. In the end, she decides against it, saying she 'mustn't force it'. Do you think she was right?
12. What is the role of visual art in recording the past? What can it do that written histories cannot?