



# Colorado Book Club Resource

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR WHEN TIME STOPPED: A MEMOIR OF MY FATHER'S WAR AND WHAT REMAINS BY ARIANA NEUMANN**

1. In the prologue, Ariana introduces the mystery of her father's life with a literal question mark in place of his death date in a Holocaust memorial in a Czech synagogue. Throughout her memoir, how does Ariana seek to answer the question of who her father was and the details of his life? What answers does she uncover?
2. Ariana describes having an idyllic childhood in Caracas as the daughter of an esteemed member of Venezuelan society. How does the Latin American setting help tell this story?
3. On page 12, Ariana reveals that, as a child, she wanted to be a detective. In what ways does Ariana play a detective in her memoir?
4. Ariana discovers a collection of her father's poetry from when he was a teenager, and learns he titled it "Drowned Lights." What do you think the meaning of this title is? How does it relate to his life, and perhaps more broadly, the Holocaust?
5. On page 123, a peer tells Ariana that she must have Jewish heritage because of her last name. Ariana, jarred by the suggestion, writes: "Was my family Jewish? Was my father a Jew? Was I? What did that even mean? Is one's identity predetermined by inheritance? Or are you who you choose to be?" How do you think Ariana answers these questions throughout her memoir?
6. Throughout her memoir, Ariana introduces the items within the small box her father left her: letters, diaries, telegrams, identification cards. How do these objects inform the memoir? How do they help Ariana understand her father's life and tell this story?
7. Ariana notes that, despite his decades in South America, her father never adapted to the relaxed Latin American timing and instead remained relentlessly punctual. Why do you think time and timepieces were significant to him?
8. During his time in Berlin, Ariana describes her father as "the boy from Prague [who] was defying the Nazi system by living in the middle of it" (page 237). How do you think this ability for secrecy benefited him and affected him throughout his life?
9. Ariana later describes her father, as she knew him, "an older man living in Caracas reviving memories that were then indistinguishable from the nightmares that woke him screaming in the night" (page 240). How is this older man connected to the boy from Prague in Berlin? Over the course of his life, how do you think Hans processed his trauma from the Nazi regime?



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10. In the epilogue, Ariana reveals that her children share her father's relationship with time and clocks, though they never met him. How do you think the question of time ripples through this story?

*Discussion questions provided by ReadingGroupGuides.com.*



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