



Colorado Book Club Resource

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR THE WOMEN IN THE CASTLE BY JESSICA SHATTUCK

1. What does the novel reveal about the method and degree of Hitler's appeal to the German populace? In what way does it address the most problematic question of the War: how the German people allowed themselves to be swept away by Hitler and Nazi propaganda. Just as important, how much—and at what point—did ordinary citizens truly know about the impoundment and murder of Europe's Jewish population.
2. Describe each of the three women—Marianne, Ania, and Benita. Talk about their different views of the Hitler regime as it unfolded and their various reasons for supporting it. What was each woman's role, or position, in German society, and how did each experience the war? What about the years after the war?
3. (*Follow-up to Question 2*) Which woman's story do you find most compelling, frightening, or horrifying? Are you more sympathetic toward one than the other two?
4. Most of the recent books about World War II focus on the horrors of the holocaust, and for good reason. Yet ordinary Germans also suffered, especially as the war neared the end. What was it like for the country as Nazism collapsed? Consider the population at large, but most particularly the women at Burg Lingenfels. How are the three of them luckier than most survivors?
5. What roles do hope...denial...and forgiveness play in this novel? Is Jessica Shattuck's book an attempt to somehow exonerate the citizens who supported Hitler's rise to power?
6. Has reading *The Women in the Castle*, changed in any way your understanding of World War II?
7. Was Marianne right to interfere in Benita's romance with Muller? Do you think that relationship would have saved her, or was it doomed by his feelings of guilt?
8. What about World War I helped cause World War II?
9. There was much debate about whether assassination was the right thing to do with Hitler. How do you feel? Are you aware of the Bonhoeffer attempt?
10. How are America and American soldiers seen in the eyes of the characters?
11. Many characters in the story say they don't believe in God or are not sure. How is our belief tested in times of war? How can we explain God's actions or lack of them during the Holocaust?



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12. Hitler has been used as the definition of evil since. What other world situations have been compared to the Holocaust? Has there been anything as bad in your opinion? Do you see any situations today that cause concern?
13. Can history repeat itself? What needs to be done to make sure there are no more Naziis?

Questions by Litlovers.



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