

Finding Home (Hungary, 1945) Reader's Group Guide

1. Each of the Jewish characters responds to their trauma differently and creates a different path to try and reintegrate once they are home. Talk about the differences and how effective the strategies were.
2. Townspeople had varying reactions to the return of the Jews to Laszlo. Discuss the reactions of the station master, the Mayor and his wife and Mor, the business owner. How did their reactions make you feel towards the characters? Is it important to understand their points of view? Why?
3. Who were your favorite and least favorite characters? Why?
4. How much did you know about the subject matter of the novel before reading it? Why do you think so few people outside of academia have heard of the difficult post-war experience of the Jews who tried to return to their homes after the war?
5. In Laszlo, the names of the Jewish businesses and the streets were changed after the deportation, prompting Yossel to remark that the Jewish history of Laszlo was being erased. Currently, several Eastern European nations are rewriting their wartime histories to diminish the effect of the Holocaust, claiming that Jews were merely one of the many national minorities that suffered during the war. How do you feel about these revisions? Do you see similar actions today?
6. Eva's high school friend Andras says that he was confused during the war by the conflict between the incessant propaganda against Jews and what he knew to be true. He remarks that when all the authority figures and newspapers are saying something, even though it isn't true it makes truth and lies "sort of equal". How do you see that dynamic playing out in the world today? How do you confront this?
7. Sergeant Ritook's family demonstrates the intergenerational passing down of prejudice and hatred through the conversations between Grandfather and grandson Victor. How can we confront the passing down of prejudice in our own families?
8. Greta transforms into a more sympathetic character as she gets to know Eva personally and is impacted by her music, ultimately giving back the house and the jewelry. Do you think this is realistic? Is getting to know people personally an effective means of overcoming prejudice?
9. Eva learns that Izidor's mother didn't want him to know he was Jewish or be raised Jewish in America, Eva wonders if this means the Nazis won, while the mother feels that being Jewish is such a burden due to anti-Semitism that this is the only way to protect her child. What do you think of the mother's choice?
10. When the town deports its German descendant population, Oskar shouts approvingly from the sidelines. Yossel remarks that "we are now the bystanders". Have you ever been a bystander to an injustice? Can you note without judgment the reasons why you didn't intervene?
11. Music is such a powerful force. Eva wants to use it to improve the world, but Professor Karady tells her that it can also be a force for evil. Can you think of examples of either or both?
12. Eva comes to the conclusion that she will never find home in Laszlo, but she feels a sense of home, family and community in the former Jewish ghetto in Budapest. Discuss Eva's trajectory here and what considerations and experiences lead her to this conclusion.