



The Secret Purposes Readers' Groups Discussion Points

About the Book

The Secret Purposes tells the story of Isaac Fabian, the Communist son of a liberal rabbi from Königsberg in Germany, who flees to Cambridge with his wife and daughter to escape Nazi persecution. As World War II breaks out Isaac is interned as an enemy alien on the Isle of Man where he meets June Murray, a Ministry of Information translator.

About the Author

David Baddiel is a comedian and television presenter and is probably best known for his partnership with Frank Skinner. David Baddiel was born in 1964. His mother was born in Nazi Germany and came to Britain with her parents before the outbreak of World War II. The Secret Purposes is partly based on his own grandfather's experience as an internee on the Isle of Man.

Discussion Questions

Please note that some of these questions may act as spoilers for the book.

1. How do you think the advice from the German Jewish Aid Committee would have been received by Jewish refugees? Is the advice helpful to refugees wishing to assimilate or lacking in recognition of how quickly hatred can spread?
2. How do you view the lack of sympathy for Jewish refugees and the way that Isaac and Lulu are categorised and their activities restricted? Is it an act of cruelty or a necessary evil? Do your views change after Isaac's internment?

3. Did Weber as a "degenerate artist" choose persecutions? What do you think the phrase refers to?
4. Why are husbands and wives kept separately on the Isle of Man?
5. When Dame Theresa advises Jane against "forcing people to relive the immediate past" is she concerned about the welfare of internees or ensuring a peaceful life on the island?
6. Jane finds that the stories she is told are not bad enough to make an impact. Does she know more about the unfolding Holocaust than the internees?
7. Does Lulu resent Isaac's Jewish background and the impact this has had on her life?
8. What is June's goal when looking for evidence of evil perpetrated against Jews? Can she really hope to change British policy? Do you think this evidence is already in existence?
9. Do you agree with Isaac's belief that facism couldn't take hold in the UK due to the "laziness" of the British working man? What is meant by this word?
10. Why did Isaac lie to June about his experiences after Kristallnacht?
11. Was Isaac in love with June?