

## Alone in Berlin

Hans Fallada

### About the Book

*Alone in Berlin* is based on a true story. Otto and Anna Quangel's son has died whilst serving with the German Army. In a moment of anger, Anna blames Otto and 'his Fuhrer'. Otto is offended and decides to resist the Nazi regime in his own unique way – writing and dropping anti-Nazi postcards. The postcards begin to be turned into the police, and the case is given to Inspector Escherich who plants a flag in a map of Berlin to mark each location where they were found. The Quangels evade capture for a very long time, and along the way we meet a number of different characters who come under suspicion, and have their own guilty secrets.

The novel is an interesting look into the fear of ordinary Germans, how many people were made into criminals even though they were living their ordinary lives. The story also follows the Quangels as they go to jail and their subsequent trial.

### About the Author

Hans Fallada became a successful author before the Nazis came to power, and tried to remain non-political when they were in power, and despite their strict control on the writing profession, Fallada did not leave Germany. He suffered from depression and at times abused alcohol and certain drugs, and spent quite a lot of time in asylums. After the war, his poet friend Becher who was working for the Soviets gave him the file on Otto and Elise Hampel, the real life case of the postcard droppers. Fallada wrote the novel in 24 days, but did not live to see its publication in 1947. The book is often bitter and sarcastic about the characters' behaviour, which adds to the emotion of the book.

### Discussion Questions

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

1. did you find it disappointing that the postcards didn't have any real impact?
2. how do you feel about Enno Kluge? Do you feel sorry for him?
3. do Kluge and Emil Borkhausen epitomise how people were able to become petty criminals under the Nazi regime if they were willing to denounce their fellow citizens?

4. what is your reaction to Baldur Persicke? Does his treatment of his father represent how the State has managed to indoctrinate children to denounce a parent?
5. do you like Judge Fromm? Though he is prepared to let Frau Rosenthal live in his spare room, and helps out the Quangels, do you feel he could do more? Is it acceptable that he is protecting himself from the Nazis?
6. discuss why Inspector Escherich kills himself.
7. how do you feel about the final chapter? Do you feel that Fallada makes a case that anyone can chose to be good and not profit from a genocidal regime?

Find out more about acts of resistance during the Holocaust

<http://www.hmd.org.uk/genocides/the-holocaust/liberation-resistance-and-rescuers>, how one person can make a difference <http://www.hmd.org.uk/resources/theme-papers/2006> and The White Rose, a group of students who stood up to the Nazi regime <http://www.hmd.org.uk/resources/education/case-study-the-white-rose>.