

Then

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About the book

Then is dedicated to ‘all the children who have to hide.’ Ten year old Felix and six year old Zelda have jumped from a moving train. They have to hide from Nazi soldiers and from civilians who could claim a reward for betraying them. It is difficult to know who to trust. The story, told through the eyes of Felix, moves at rapid pace and there is a sense of urgency behind the action. As one chapter closes, with a problem resolved, the next picks up the pace by opening with the word ‘Then...’ and adding yet another challenge for the two children. The book deals with atrocity, violence and making choices. It is the story of a desperate attempt to stay alive but it is also full of humour, courage and hope. The ending will shock and you must be prepared to discuss emotional issues with young readers. Nevertheless students of between the ages of 10 and 14 will appreciate hearing historical scenarios explained from the standpoint of youth. The book works well when read aloud.

Discussion Questions

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

1. how do we know that Felix wants to protect Zelda?
2. why is it difficult for Felix and Zelda to trust people?
3. how would you describe the friendship/relationship between Felix and Zelda?
4. is Felix always a good judge of character?
5. who gives the most help to the two children and what risks do they take?
6. are there some people in the book who are wholly good or wholly bad? Try to think about all the characters in the book before you decide and then give reasons for your answer.
7. is there anything in the story which surprises you? If yes, try to explain why you are surprised.

8. describe anything in the story which makes you angry or sad or perhaps both.
9. what sorts of children have joined the Hitler Youth? Why did they join?
10. how did you feel at the end of book? Is there any hope at the end of the story?
11. if you were asked to write a review of this book which section would you identify as the most exciting part of the story and why?
12. what do you think happens next? Write or describe a new chapter which begins with 'Then' and ends with the sentence 'Eventually.....'