

Discussion Questions for

Roads of Resistance

By A. L. Sowards

Ingrid faces multiple types of healing throughout the novel: physical, emotional, and spiritual. Discuss examples of each. How did her experiences shape her as a character?

The Netherlands expected their neutrality to protect them from German invasion, but that was not the case. How did their former predictions of safety affect their preparations for war? Their reaction to the conquest?

How did Ingrid's faith sustain her? How did her faith evolve throughout the story?

Why do you think Ingrid is able to hold onto her faith in the midst of all the bloodshed, starvation, and horror of war and yet falters when her baby dies?

What experiences make Gerrit lose his faith in Communism? What experiences help him find faith in Jesus?

How did your feelings about Rupert change over the course of the novel? Did you ever like him? Feel sorry for him? Hate him?

How do Rupert's experiences as an abused child and as a soldier in Stalingrad shape his character?

Discuss the sacrifices Dr. van der Veen makes for other characters. What do you think is behind his willingness to work hard and put the needs of others above his own needs?

How did Ingrid's experience change as she went from surviving the war to resisting the occupation to once again surviving?

How did wartime tensions and suspicions affect the relationship between Ingrid and Gerrit? How did shared work and a common cause affect their relationship? Compare how Dr. van der Veen, Gerrit, and Ingrid deal with grief. Do you see yourself in any of their responses?

Ingrid and Gerrit's wedding ceremony and celebrations were very simple. Did you find that romantic, gloomy, or both?

When Ingrid asks Henry why he is helping her, he says: "I've seen a lot of things during this war. Felt a lot of things. So much pain. So many lives ruined. So many people who didn't get a chance to see the peace. I can't fix it. I can't bring Anita back or rescue any of the people killed in bombings or gas chambers or sunken ships. But if I can do something good for your family, fix one person's grief, then maybe it will help everything else feel not quite so hopeless." Have you ever despaired over the hardships you see around you or see on the news? Have you found things that help you feel not quite so hopeless?

This story shows many small acts of kindness given by strangers or near-strangers: Dr. van der Veen taking Ingrid into his home, Gerrit distributing ration cards for unknown onderduikers, strangers helping both Gerrit and Ingrid escape when they are on the run, a shop keeper giving Gerrit wood for free. Have you been blessed by something a stranger has done for you? How did it make you feel?

This book portrays a wide variety of Dutch responses to the war: those who collaborated and hunted down onderduikers, those who simply did their best to survive, and those who actively resisted. Among the resistance groups there was also a variety of focuses. Some focused on hiding those in need, some actively sought to provide information to the Allies, some sabotaged enemy military targets, and some became involved in assassinations. Which activities did you approve of? Were there activities that you disapproved of? Why?

With the benefit of hindsight, how would you have adjusted the plans for Operation Market-Garden, the major Allied airborne operation meant to liberate the Netherlands and clear a path through to Germany?

Discuss this quote that appears several times in the book: "When the world has gone dark, don't turn away from the light."

Thank you to Kiana Petersen for contributing several of the questions included in this list.