

Book Club questions (“The Lyon Affair” and “A Motherland’s Daughter, A Fatherland’s Son”):

“The Lyon Affair”:

1. Why, in your opinion, did Blanche join the Resistance? What were her true motives?
2. Marcel, Father Yves, and Giselle are all guilty of murder, which they committed in the name of the noble cause. How did each of them deal with this dark part of their past? Did any of them feel remorse or did they all justify their actions by the necessity?
3. Did the Resistance at this point form a well-organized force? Talk about the goals of the MI6 and General de Gaulle: do they coincide or not? Explain why.
4. Were all French opposed to the Occupation? Talk about collaborators like Raimond Bouillon: what was his attitude toward the Germans? How is it different from that of Etienne? Why did Etienne agree to take up the offered position?
5. Why did Blanche decide to meet with Sievers? How did her attitude toward the Resistance change under his influence?
6. Talk about the differences in the activities of the cells in the Free and Occupied Zones. Why was it important for the Resistance members to have liaison agents in both? Who, in your opinion, risked more: the résistants based in the Free Zone or the Occupied one?
7. How did the situation change when Germany declared war on Russia? How did the Resistance benefit from it?

8. Talk about relationship between Blanche and Giselle. Why, in your opinion, did Sievers choose to keep Giselle's life and execute Blanche instead, despite her working for him?
9. Why did Father Yves ask Etienne to join the cell? Do you think his past as a sharpshooter has anything to do with this decision?
10. Why did Giselle decide to sacrifice herself for the cell? And why did Tommy?

“A Motherland's Daughter, A Fatherland's Son”:

1. In your opinion, explain why Kira and Werner became attracted to each other so fast despite their belonging to two different armies? Has it anything to do with their family background? How is it similar?
2. Discuss the reaction of both to Germany declaring war on the Soviet Union. How is it similar/different?
3. Talk about Werner's first experience on the battlefield. How is it similar/different from what Kira experienced during her first encounter with the enemy?
4. Talk about Werner's relationships with his immediate superiors. Why, in your opinion, did he eventually start experiencing resentment toward the Wehrmacht High Command and all of the higher-ups? Talk about his relationship with his uncle.
5. Discuss Kira's relationship with her comrades. Do you think she encountered any chauvinism/prejudice during her service? If yes, talk about examples of such cases and how she dealt with such attitudes.
6. Why, in your opinion, did so many atrocities take place on the Eastern Front? How did Werner react to them? How did Kira?

7. Discuss the similarities and differences between the German and the Soviet Armies. What about their political views? Were all Germans die-hard nationalists? Were all Russians heavily-indoctrinated communists? Explain your point of view.
8. How did both Kira and Werner change as the war drew to an end? Why do you think both experienced suicidal thoughts at some point?
9. Why, in your opinion, did Werner try to save Konstantin and the rest of the commissars from the burning barn?
10. Some German POWs decided to remain on the territory of the Soviet Union after they were released from the Gulag camps. Why do you think Werner decided to stay there as well, instead of going back to live in Germany together with Kira like they initially planned?