

Karolina's Twins

Discussion Questions

- 1 Lena and Catherine are certainly different people, from different backgrounds and different eras, yet they are alike in many respects. How does the story reveal their parallel characteristics?
- 2 Choosing to have a baby in the midst of the Holocaust is an impossible decision. What went through Lena's mind? What do you think would go through your own?
- 3 There is an obvious disconnect in the relationship between Arthur and his mother. What brought it about? What do you think motivated Arthur to pursue incompetency hearings?
- 4 There have been extraordinary heroes who voluntarily entered Auschwitz to smuggle out information to the Allies. Witold Pilecki and Jan Karski are two such individuals. Knowing what was happening in Auschwitz relatively early in the war, why do you think the Allies chose not to bomb Auschwitz? Do you agree with that decision?
- 5 Lena (and the survivor who inspired this novel) actively protested the Neo-Nazis' plan to march through Skokie, Illinois, in 1978. Skokie is a town with many Holocaust survivors, which is why the Nazis chose the location. The American Civil Liberties Union led a lawsuit on behalf of the Nazis to allow the march, justifying their reasoning on First Amendment free speech grounds. What is your feeling about such a march and protest?
- 6 Colonel Muller was a ranking Wehrmacht officer who also served in the underground, yet he refused to abjure his German status. He was an active part of the German oppression. What are your feelings about him?
- 7 Why do you think that Lena kept her secret for so many years?
- 8 There has always been quite a discussion and study about religion in the camps. How is it possible to believe in God under those circumstances? Yet Yossi and Chaya held on to their strong beliefs; Lena's beliefs were not so clear and were often contradictory. What are your thoughts on the subject of God and suffering?
- 9 Poland had changed after the war. Why did David and Lena decide they could no longer live in Chrzanow?
- 10 Before Lena (and the survivor who inspired this story) could leave Chrzanow and Poland behind her, she had to go to Auschwitz so that she could see it through "liberated eyes." What do you suppose she saw?