

Fatherland by Robert Harris Study Questions

Important Characters

Xavier March
Max Jaeger
Charlie Maguire
Josef Buhler
Odilo Globocnik (Globus)
Hermann Jost
Pili March
Martin Luther
Wilhelm Stukart
Walther Fiebes
Henry Nightingale
Karl Krebs
Artur Nebe
Herr Zaugg

Important Theme Ideas

Betrayal
Anti-Semitism
The Search for and Value of Truth

1. Xavier March had been a successful U-boat officer early in his military career. Discuss March's current state of mind and possible reasons for his dissatisfaction with life in the Third Reich.
2. Compare and contrast the characters of Xavier March and Max Jaeger. Why was March chosen to lead the Buhler investigation and not Max?
3. Even at the end of the novel when March faces impossible odds for survival he still attempts to fight. Discuss the nature of his character and what it is that drives him.
4. Discuss the feasibility of the German people not knowing about the Holocaust by the year 1964 when the story takes place?
5. Discuss the implications all over the world in 1964 if the information of the Holocaust were to be revealed.
6. March's greatest sorrow is the indoctrination of his son, Pili, into the Nazi way of thinking and living. What do you think will happen to Pili in the future? Will he understand his father or remain entrenched in the Nazi life?
7. Do you think Charlie made it across the German-Swiss border? If she did, why would that be both a happy and sad event for her?
8. Did you find the alternative history of *Fatherland* convincing? If so, what details strengthened that conviction?

9. 'Fatherland works on all levels' -- Washington Post. What do you think this means? How do you think Fatherland works best?
10. Do you think Robert Harris's portrayal of women effectively reflects the society he has created?
11. 'History is told through the eyes of the victor.' How does this statement apply to Fatherland?
12. 'You're an irony yourself, March, in a way... We set out to breed a generation of supermen to rule an empire...we trained them to apply hard fact -- pitilessly, even cruelly...And what happens? A few of you...begin to turn this pitiless clear thinking on us...' (page 240). What other ironies do you think there are in Fatherland?
13. How does the theme of deception work in the novel?
14. Do you think Xavier March had a fatal flaw? If so, what was it?
15. Explain how the structure of the novel – being told over a one week period -- is effective or ineffective.