

Shadows of Berlin

Reading Group Guide

1. Aaron is extremely impatient for children. Why is Rachel reluctant to start a family? Does Aaron respect her reasoning?
2. Rachel's uncle, Feter Fritz, is an important character in Rachel's life. Yet he is often manipulative and self-serving in his behavior toward her. Why do you think she puts up with him and continues to go out of her way to maintain his affections?
3. In many ways, Rachel resists thinking of herself as traumatized. What prevents her from feeling "worthy" of her struggles with mental health?
4. Characterize the Red Angel. Did your opinion of Angelika change as you learned more of her story? In Rachel's position, would you have accepted her help in New York City ten years after the end of the war?
5. What does Aaron expect Rachel to get from her appointments with her therapist? What does she actually achieve through therapy?
6. What is the root of the rivalry between Aaron and his cousin Ezra? What does the character of their rivalry say about Aaron? How does Rachel react to their rivalry?
7. Had you heard of Jews living as U-boats during the war before reading the book? How did hiding in plain sight provide safety, and how did it increase danger?
8. Compare Rachel's and Aaron's relationships to Judaism. How do they deal with the differences in their experiences?
9. Why does Rachel become so invested in Naomi and Tyrell's relationship? Do you think she helps them?
10. Rachel feels responsible for carrying on the legacy of the many Jews who lost their lives, including her mother. What actions does she take to fulfill this responsibility? How do you contribute to the legacy of your ancestors?