

Skokie Public Library's Book Discussion Guide

DEATH IN VENICE

by Thomas Mann

- What was your initial perception of Aschenbach -- both as a writer and as a man -- and did that perception change as the story progressed?
- What ignites Aschenbach's wanderlust and compels him to leave his home on a holiday? What does he hope to gain during his travels?
- When Aschenbach sets out on his journey from Munich, he does not have a destination in mind. What ultimately leads him to Venice?
- In what ways does Aschenbach embody both his father's "sober, conscientious nature" and the "darker, more fiery impulses" (pg 12) of his mother?
- Other than physical beauty, what is it about Tadzio that attracts the interest of Aschenbach? Is the attraction merely sexual in nature, or does Tadzio represent something more to Aschenbach?
- How does Mann's use of Greek mythology illuminate Aschenbach's story?
- Is it possible to have a relationship with someone by sight only, as Aschenbach believes in regard to himself and Tadzio (with whom he never speaks directly)? Does Aschenbach imagine Tadzio's returned interest?
- How does Aschenbach's fervent interest in learning the truth about the cholera outbreak mirror his obsession with Tadzio?
- Why does Aschenbach decide to stay in Venice despite the risk of contracting cholera, a disease that is often fatal?
- The book's title is an indication of how the story ends. Did having this foreknowledge affect your reading of **Death in Venice**?
- How do you interpret the story's ending?
- What, in your opinion, is the message Mann is conveying in *Death in Venice*?



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