

Skokie Public Library's Book Discussion Guide

Dreamers of the Day by Mary Doria Russell

- In what ways is this book a coming-of-age story? In what ways is it a ghost story?
- How is Agnes like her mother?
- Who were the women who contributed to Agnes' growth and how did they affect her?
- How does Mrs. Motta figure in Agnes' life?
- Discussing the various women throughout the novel: Agnes, Mumma, Lillie, Gertrude, Clementine, Mildred, Mrs. Motta, Lady Cox. What similarities do you find? What are their striking differences? Generations later, do these women seem alien to you or familiar?
- Who got the most out of the relationship between Karl and Agnes?
- How does Mumma try to dissuade Agnes from her interests in Karl.
- What are some of the reasons for Agnes' ambivalence toward Karl? What attracts her to him?
- When Agnes falls overboard what did Karl's demeanor during the incident tell the reader?
- Discuss how Rosie the dog was an important accessory to Agnes' journey. How does Rosie help Agnes? Why did the author make her a dachshund?
- Why doesn't Agnes stay at the Semiramis Hotel even though she has a reservation there?
- When Osama bin Laden took "credit" for the events of 9/11, he said that the attacks in 2001 were, in part, revenge for "the catastrophe of eighty years ago." What "catastrophe" was he referring to? Why does it seem to be remembered in the Middle East, but forgotten in the West?
- What were some of the effects of the flu epidemic on the novel's characters? How did it change the world?
- How does Agnes assess Wilson's performance at Versailles? What was the effect of his bout with influenza?
- Who are the dreamers of the day? How can we tell which are dangerous?
- How does Lawrence soften Agnes' judgment about Christian missionary work?
- How does her visit to Gethsemane change Agnes?
- Why do you believe the author chose to have Agnes' mother and Mildred the shopgirl "accompany" her on her trip?
- What does Agnes' afterlife add to the story?
- Did you think the author's purpose in writing the book was to shed light on a historical event or present a coming-of-age novel of a young woman?



Skokie Public Library

5215 Oakton Street
Skokie, Illinois 60077
847.673.7774 / 847.673.7797 fax
www.skokielibrary.info

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