

Skokie Public Library's Book Discussion Guide

The Invisible Wall by Harry Bernstein

- At the start of the book, Harry is only four years old – do you think he was old enough and/or responsible to be running errands for others?
- Why did Harry typically tag along with his mother?
- If these families were so impoverished, why didn't more of the women work in the tailoring shops and/or become teachers? (If the work is good enough for the girls who have just finished their formal(?) education, why don't the mothers work?)
- Did it seem odd that Ada (Harry's mother) had to dictate her letters instead of writing them herself?
- Ada literally and figuratively tiptoed around Jack (Harry's father). How fearful was she of her husband?
- If you were Ada, would you have stayed married to Jack?
- Do you think Ada could have divorced and/or deserted Jack?
- What do you think Jack would have done if Ada had left him?
- Do you think Ada could have managed her family and household responsibilities without Jack?
- Were you surprised that Ada had another child?
- How do think Ada felt when she was "with Jack"? What kind of thoughts could have been going through her mind?
- How was Jack able to get away with being such a tyrant? While I can't imagine him ever pursuing assistance, do you think he could have benefited from a meeting with a professional?
- Why was Jack less of a tyrant after Sidney was born?
- What do you think Ada thought of Larry as opposed to Jack?
- Do you think Ada and Larry could have been a happy/successful couple?
- Do you think the women on their street would get together regularly to talk/gossip before Ada opened her shop?
- Besides what was mentioned in the book, what else do you think the women would talk about?
- If you were Ada, how would you treat Rose based on her behavior?
- Do you think Ada treated her children equally (or did you sense any favoritism)?
- Harry rarely mentions his brothers, Joe and Saul? Why do you think they didn't figure more prominently in this book?
- How was Harry able to remember so much from his earliest years, especially since he didn't write the book until so many decades later?
- How successful do you think Lily and Arthur's relationship would have been if they had lived longer? Do you think their religious upbringings would have interfered with their relationship?
- There were several people who had "inappropriate relationships" in this book. Do you think this was commonplace in that era or just coincidence?
- Do you think the Christians on their street felt as strongly against intermarriage?
- If you were Ada, would you go back to the butcher?
- Why was Harry so compliant with Sarah's requests?
- Why did Harry agree to keep so many of Lily's secrets? At such a young age, why would he want to be involved in them at all?
- What made Rose so motherly during the shiva?



Skokie Public Library

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

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