

Skokie Public Library's Book Discussion Guide

THE LEOPARD

by Giuseppe di Lampedusa

- The first line of *The Leopard* reads (in translation) "Now and in the hour of our death." Where else do we see death in the novel and what is its significance?
- Critics have seen *The Leopard* as either a left-wing critique of the Prince and his class or as nostalgic celebration of aristocratic values. How do you see the Prince as a person and as a representative of his class? Do you get any sense of what Lampedusa's political views might be?
- The narrator of *The Leopard* frequently glances ahead to the future lives of his characters and to events in the hundred or so years between those in the novel and the time of its publication. Why does the narrator make these anachronistic asides in a work of historical fiction?
- Two sections of *The Leopard* ("Father Pirrone Pays a Visit" and "Relics") do not directly involve the Prince. What is the role of these sections? How do they comment on the rest of the novel?
- *The Leopard* is concerned with events in the nineteenth century. Is it also concerned with the twentieth century? Is it relevant to today?
- What is the role of religion in the world of *The Leopard*?
- One critic called *The Leopard* "a Sicilian *Death of Ivan Ilych*." How are the two works similar?
- *The Leopard*'s most famous line is "If we want things to stay as they are . . . things will have to change." How do you explain this paradox?
- There's very little narrative tension in *The Leopard*. Why doesn't Lampedusa choose to tell a more exciting story?



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