



Book Group Discussion Questions

Six Thousand Miles to Home: A Novel Inspired by a True Story of WW II

In the first section of *Six Thousand Miles to Home*, “Uncertainty,” what is the nature of the uncertainty faced by the Kohn family? How might we identify uncertainty in our own, contemporary lives and respond to it?

While it is nearly impossible to know how one might react to a threat such as the Nazi invasion of Poland, what might you have done in Josefina and Julius’s situation?

The title of the second chapter, “Better to Carry than to Ask,” derives from a Polish adage. What does this expression tell us about neighbors or strangers? What are your thoughts about this adage—is it better to carry what we need or better to ask for it?

The second section is called “No Man’s Land.” This term has an interesting history (see page 68 of the Reading/Teaching Guide for additional information): No Man’s Land refers to territory which is unoccupied or under dispute between parties who leave it unoccupied because of fear or uncertainty. The term originally designated a contested territory or a dumping ground for refuse between fiefdoms. During World War I, “no man’s land” described the area between two enemy trench systems, which neither side wished to cross nor seize for fear of attack. The term is also used to refer to ambiguity and anomalous or indefinite areas in an application, situation, or jurisdiction. What are some of the *no man’s lands* that Josefina and her children encounter in this section, and how do they reconcile their fear and uncertainty?

At the end of every visit and conversation, the real Suzanna Cohen was fond of telling visitors and callers, “Enjoy your life.” What is the genesis of that expression in this section of the book?

In order to leave the Soviet Union, Josefina understands that to survive, she must hide her and her children’s Jewishness. What would you do if faced with such a quandary?

The third section is titled “In the Land of Esther’s Children.” Esther is a historical figure of great importance to Iranian Jews. How are Josefina and Suzanna like or unlike this Persian heroine? How does the notion of Esther’s steadfast bravery serve as a model for women?

Soleiman Cohen is a man who embraces the emancipation afforded by modernity while honoring the traditional culture of Mizrahi Jews in which his character is forged. What are some of the indicators of these respective values?

Soleiman Cohen takes into his home two refugees, although many of the Polish refugees were sick with communicable diseases such as typhus and in spite of losing his own father to typhus. Imagine what it would mean to take in a refugee fleeing because of persecution.