

# Salt To The Sea

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

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Why should we read books set in other countries? What do we gain from another country's literary canon?

Even if books don't have literary merit, what can we take away from fun fictional titles set abroad? What does international historical fiction teach us?

Do you prefer nonfiction or historical fiction?

Would both adults and teens enjoy *Salt to the Sea*? How would this book read differently as an adult fiction title?

Do you like reading YA, and what are the genre's merits? What are teen fiction's downfalls?

Do you enjoy reading books with alternating narratives?

What do readers gain through multiple perspectives?

If you could choose only one character to tell their story in *Salt to the Sea*, who would you want to hear from the most and why? What other books can you think of with multiple narrators?

How do race, gender, and religion play a part in *Salt to the Sea*?

The sinking of the *Wilhelm Gustloff* invokes stark images of war affecting innocent women and children. Civilians are under attack. What are the lasting impacts of war on youth? Why is showing the civilian side just as important as the soldier/war-front perspective? What do we gain, and what do we lose?

**Discussion Questions Provided by The Uncorked Librarian**

# DISCUSSION GUIDE CONTINUED

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Sepetys brings attention to the Wilhelm Gustloff and Amber Room, two true parts of history. What did you learn from this story? What truths can you take away?

Why do you think the Wilhelm Gustloff is lesser known in comparison to the sinking of the Titanic? Why is there no major motion picture with Leo as Florian?

Documentation and having the right papers are a terrifying issue for Emilia. How are her story and situation relevant to refugees today?

Did the budding romance between Joana and Florian add to the story? Was it necessary?

Alfred is quite a vain and disillusioned character. What purpose does he serve in the novel? How do you feel about him?

Which character is the bravest and most courageous? Who is the most selfless?

Is there a perspective that you are missing in Salt to the Sea that you'd like to see? Is there one that you would take away? Whose story touches you the most?

Although we know that the Wilhelm Gustloff is destined to sink, did you have to read ahead to see how the book ends? Is there suspense, and if so, how does Sepetys build suspense?

Why end the novel the way Sepetys does in relation to Emilia's story? Would you have preferred a different ending? Is it poetic?

Why are books like Salt to the Sea important? Who would you recommend this novel for?

Overall, is this story a tragedy or one of hope? Is Salt to the Sea a survival story?

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