

DEBRIANNA OBARA

BLOK 42 - Book Club Discussion Guide A Historical Focus

1. How aware of Polish history were you before you read this book?
2. How did the loss of sovereignty encourage citizens to find ways to keep their national identity alive?
3. Do you see parallels between the Ukraine / Russia conflicts of today to Poland's feelings about its more powerful neighbors, Russia and Germany?
4. What is the significance of the name "Henryk" as it relates to Aniela's family?
5. What significance does Aniela's dancing have throughout this story?
6. How is the importance of language demonstrated in this book?
7. What does Henryk's outburst regarding his father's disillusionment during the Great War foreshadow?
8. What is the significance of With Fire and Sword to the story? Why do you think this book inspired a fight between Aniela and Henryk early in their marriage?
9. What do the carvings in the chambers of the Wieliczka Salt Mine tell us about the miners who worked in it?
10. How are the differences between city and country people examined in this story?
11. How are Poland's attitudes toward foreign affairs and national sovereignty delineated by Aniela's father and Henryk's discussion while Henryk is attending the University?
12. What do you make of Aniela's take on teaching dance as a lessor act of resistance than the fighting being done by Henryk? Did you think she should risk teaching dance underground?
13. In what ways did Aniela use the traditional understanding of feminine behavior to her advantage?
14. Do you think that Irena was working with the resistance?
15. What are your thoughts on the degree to which Aniela had to appease her German employer? Specifically, being a companion Herr Neumann's wife?

