



READING GROUP QUESTIONS

THE UNCOMMON LIFE OF ALFRED WARNER IN SIX DAYS

JULIET CONLIN

What was your initial reaction to the book? Did it hook you immediately, or take some time to get into?

How did the structure affect the story and your appreciation of the book? Did you enjoy the use of multiple voices? Do you think the author did a good job with it, or was it distracting?

Brynja's story is told 'back-to-front'. Was this confusing to read? Or did it add to the overall tone of the story? Would the novel read differently if her story had been told chronologically?

In what way was Alfred's life 'uncommon'?

Being born in Germany, Alfred was caught up in the events of the Nazi era, including spending time in the Wehrmacht. Did he feel guilty about his part in the war? Was there redemption for him in the book? Was this important to you in deciding whether you liked or disliked the book?

Early in the novel, Julia takes Alfred into her home although he is a stranger. What were her motives for doing this? Do you think the recent death of her father affected her decision to take care of Alfred?

Hearing voices is a major theme of the novel. Do you think it is possible that Alfred's voices really were 'supernatural'? Or was this perhaps an explanation given by his mother to protect him? How would Alfred's life have been different if he hadn't heard voices?

Relatedly, Brynja's voices were violent and cruel. Did the book change your opinion or perspective about the phenomenon of voice-hearing? Do you feel different now than you did before you read it?

Alfred and Isobel's son John leaves home without telling his parents. What were his reasons for leaving? Do you think Alfred could have done anything to improve his relationship with his son?

Later in the book, Isobel decides to leave Alfred. Why do you think she left him? Was Alfred in any way responsible for her leaving? Why do you think she returned to him?

The book spans several decades. What did you think of the description of the different time periods? Was there enough background information for you to understand the events in the story? Was relevant information lumped altogether, or integrated into the story? How did this affect your appreciation of the book?

How did you feel about the ending? Was it satisfying, or was anything left unresolved? What do you wish had been different?

If the book were being adapted into a film, who would you want to see play what parts?

What do you think will be your lasting impression of the book? What will be your most vivid memories of it a year from now? Or will it just leave a vague impression, and what will that be? Or will you not think of it at all in a year's time?

If you enjoyed the book, please consider leaving a review, e.g. on Amazon or Goodreads. Reader reviews matter!