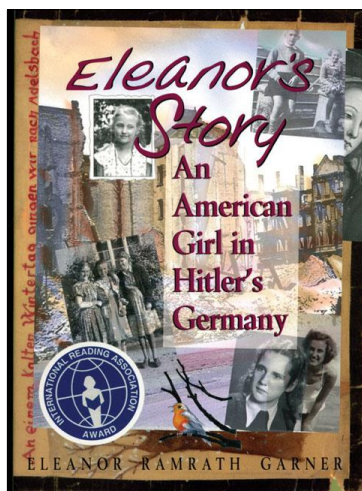

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



HC: 978-1-56145-296-5

Eleanor's Story ***An American Girl in Hitler's Germany*** by Eleanor Ramrath Garner

During the Great Depression, when she is nine, Eleanor's family moves from her beloved America to Germany, where her father has been offered a good job. But war breaks out as her family is crossing the Atlantic, and they cannot return to the United States. Eleanor tries to maintain her American identity as she feels herself pulled into the turbulent life roiling around her. She fervently hopes for an Allied victory, yet for years she must try to survive the Allied bombs shattering her neighborhood. Her family faces separations, bombings, hunger, the final fierce battle for Berlin, the Russian invasion, and the terrors of Soviet occupancy.

1. At a young age, Eleanor had to leave America to move to Germany. Imagine you are living in a place where you can understand the language but cannot read or write it. What would you worry about most? How would you adjust in school?
2. Do you know any American youngsters with immigrant parents in your classroom or community? How are they treated?
3. If you have moved, what do you miss most about your old community? If you haven't moved, what would you miss most? What do/would you miss least? What treasures would you bury?
4. In chapter four, Eleanor discusses joining the Hitler Youth. What did you think of that? Would you join a group with questionable goals so that you'd fit in better? Why or why not?
5. What do you think the title of chapter seven, "Childhood Lost" means?
6. Throughout the story, Eleanor finds escape and solace in reading. What books or stories have been important to you and why?
7. Eleanor often describes how various forms of art helped her through her experiences during the war. What kinds of art are used today as therapy? What kinds of art do you use to make yourself feel better?
8. How did Eleanor's faith or spirituality influence her survival? Have you seen faith influence the outcomes of other life stories with which you are familiar?
9. Consider the situations in this book where people have to make a decision. What different things factor into the decisions the characters make? How do we, ourselves make decisions when we disagree with ideas or policies of the authorities or of the government?
10. Of the wars you have read about, watched in movies or on TV, or studied, what are some universal experiences of war? Over the centuries, what has changed in the experiences of war, from the soldiers' and the citizens' perspectives?
11. Eleanor mentions food often and the importance of food for survival. What are other necessities for survival? How does war impact the availability of these necessities?

12. Two emotional responses seem to be constant for wartime survivors: survivor's guilt and post-traumatic stress. How did Eleanor experience these responses in Germany and after she returned to the United States?
13. When Eleanor and Frank return to Stratford and visit their old house, after a nostalgic look, she decides it's time to go. What do you think this means?
14. In what ways, socially and emotionally, has Eleanor become a different person from the girl who first arrived in Germany before the war? After reading the Epilogue and Author's Note, what experiences do you think shaped Eleanor the most in her later life as an adult?