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# THE ORPHAN'S TALE DISCUSSION GUIDE

- 1 Noa perhaps develops the most as a character throughout the novel. Discuss her development in the early chapters. How do you see her by the ending?
- 2 Astrid faces many crises throughout the story. What do you think was the hardest blow for her and how does her past inform who she becomes later in the novel? If you had to pick, is there one thing that you think defines her as a character?
- 3 Astrid and Noa's relationship starts fraught but develops into a bond that, with Theo, becomes a driving force for their survival. What were the major turning points in the evolution of their friendship? Have you had a friendship that was life-changing in some way?
- 4 As readers, we face many awful scenarios along with the characters as they must make impossible decisions with major consequences. Were there decisions characters made that you particularly disagreed with?
- 5 The title *Orphan's Tale* refers to one of the most emotionally impactful moments of the novel. How did you react to this scene? Were there other moments that you found particularly moving?
- 6 Living under the Nazi regime entails fighting for survival in a culture of terror and violence. Yet, we meet characters who resist in their own ways, whether it is Herr Neuhoﬀ shielding Jews within the circus or the clockmaker Metz keeping his mezuzah, a symbol of his heritage and faith, in plain sight. Discuss how this terror permeated the characters' lives and the costs Jenoff's characters pay for their acts of resistance, large or small.
- 7 The novel takes place primarily in a circus and Jenoff has deeply researched the history and culture of circus life, from the rigors of the aerialist arts to the internal customs and politics that structure this, in some ways, insular community. What were your impressions of this community and what do you think is the significance of placing the story in a circus existing under the oppressive Nazi regime?
- 8 Though the novel centers on Noa and Astrid, the male characters in the novel play important supporting roles. Discuss Peter's character and his fateful decision to go through with his act.
- 9 The bulk of the novel is framed by two scenes that occur many years in the future of the main storyline. What was your reaction to the revelations in this final flash-forward scene?