



SPRINGTIME OF THE SPIRIT

Discussion Questions

1. At the beginning of the story, Germany has been defeated and the soldiers are marching home. What do you imagine they were thinking and feeling at that time, and what do you imagine the waiting families might have been thinking? Have you ever faced disgrace or defeat? How did you respond?
2. Jurgen's initial message is a cry against tyranny and a desire to end inequality, but he compromises his ideals when they no longer seem feasible. How do you think someone as idealistic as Jurgen was able to cross a line from wanting to serve society to wanting to control it? In what areas are you tempted to compromise when it's difficult to achieve your goals?
3. Does the separation between Annaliese and her parents have more to do with their beliefs, or just a lack of communication? Is it possible for family members or friends who hold different beliefs to still be close to one another? What does it take to make that sort of relationship work?
4. Frau Düray asks Christophe to go to Munich in search of Annaliese. Do you think she did the right thing, or should she have accepted her daughter's independence? How have you seen parents respond when their children rebel? What are some constructive responses? destructive responses?
5. When you've been in a crowd or part of an audience, have you ever been aware of the audience uniting as one large element, wanting to enjoy/agree/approve of the speaker or performer? How did you respond? Did your emotions and energy change after the crowd dispersed?
6. Is there an appropriate balance between an idealistic society that shares all things in common and the work and reward system of capitalism? What are the merits and failures of both ends of the spectrum? How much should people depend on the government? Should individuals, churches, and private charities assume more of the burden?

7. When Jurgen asks how a loving God could let war destroy the world he created, Christophe responds that God gave us the ability to choose, and He won't take back that gift just because we make a bad choice. Do you agree with Christophe's response? How would you have answered Jurgen?
8. Leo is the power behind Jurgen. Have you ever known, or known of, anyone who is happy to be working behind the scenes, avoiding the attention or accolades but pleased when the one they've chosen to support receives such things? A teacher? A relative?
9. Christophe has qualms about Jurgen's agenda. Was it ethical for him to remain and help train Jurgen's fighting forces anyway? How would you have handled the task that Leo and Jurgen assigned Christophe?
10. Some of the Socialist ideals appear to offer freedom: from the restrictions of government, of religion, of nationalism, even of marriage. How do these ideas agree or disagree with your own view of freedom?
11. At one point Leo states that the masses will allow almost anything to happen unless a gun is pointed directly at them. Do you agree that the populace is easily swayed? How involved should people be in politics? How involved do you think the government should be in the lives of its citizens?
12. How did you feel about Anneliese's decision to help Jurgen escape near the end of the story? Would you have done the same if you were in her position?
13. Even before the First World War, women of many countries had been fighting for the vote. How do you think this war influenced attitudes about the role women play in society, especially in view of the next world war that was yet to come?
14. How did you feel about Annaliese and Christophe's decision to stay in Germany at the end of the story? Did you wish they had gone to America with Annaliese's parents?