



THE WILLOW WREN

discussion questions

- 1 Although never spelled out explicitly, it becomes clear that Ludwig is on the autism spectrum. How does this hurt him, or help him, or both?
- 2 Is Ludwig the willow wren? If so, what positive and negative aspects of his personality does that highlight?
- 3 How do different characters cope with trauma and grief? Herr Tischendorf? Felix? Luise? Ludwig?
- 4 How does the relationship between Ludwig and Luise change throughout the story? And between Ludwig and Wilhelm?
- 5 Theodor is the most important character after Ludwig and his parents. What is his role in the story and in Ludwig's life?
- 6 How much of Wilhelm's post-war transformation can be credited to denazification? What else could be involved? How real do you think his transformation is?
- 7 Was denazification the right approach? What else might the Allies have done with the millions of Nazi Party members? How did the Soviets approach this problem?
- 8 Why do you think Wilhelm fails to go through with his planned suicide?
- 9 Sumi remains unapologetic about her article and claims she simply reported the facts. Do you agree with her? Do you think she's being completely honest with herself?
- 10 What was your reaction to how German atrocities, including the Holocaust, were handled in the story? How do the characters react as they learn about them? How would you have reacted?
- 11 What have you learned about Nazism, viewed from inside Germany? Can you apply what you've learned to the modern world?
- 12 How does Ludwig's view of Russia and Communism evolve over the story? How about his view of the Western Allies?
- 13 In many ways, *The Willow Wren* is a coming-of-age story. How does the war and its aftermath shape Ludwig? What lessons does he learn?
- 14 What do the forests in the story symbolize?
- 15 What is the role of pride for all the major characters? In which ways does pride both positively and negatively affect them?

