

Reading Group Guide for *Immigrant Soldier, The Story of a Ritchie Boy*

1. How did you experience *Immigrant Soldier*? Were you engaged immediately or did it take a while to “get into it?” What about the novel contributed to your ability to be interested in the story?
2. *Immigrant Soldier* is one man’s story. The plot moves Herman along from one stage of his life to another and has been described as “a coming of age story, an immigrant tale, and a World War II adventure.” Which of these stories was most interesting to you? Why?
3. What are Herman’s motivations and goals? How do they change? How do his choices and actions help or hinder his success? Do you think he achieves his goals in the end?
4. How does Herman change as he moves from one stage of his life to another? In the first chapter, he is only nineteen years old and later, in two back-story chapters, his childhood is described. What kind of teenager is Herman in the beginning? How did his childhood influence his emerging character? What type of man does he become by the end of the novel?
5. During the course of *Immigrant Soldier*, Herman has quite a few close relationships that are important to various stages of his experience. Which of the supporting characters did you find most interesting? Most likeable? Least likeable? How did they influence Herman’s development?
6. Describe the dynamics between Herman and his older brother, Friedel (Fred). How did their relationship change from boyhood to adulthood?
7. Four women were especially important in Herman’s life – Clara (his mother), Molly, Aunt Nelda, and Gisela. How did each of these women influence Herman or change his perspective?
8. Is *Immigrant Soldier* an action-oriented book or character-driven book? If plot-driven, what action interests you the most? Is the plot predictable or does it have unexpected complications? If character-driven, are Herman’s goals and actions believable and justified?
9. Which parts of the novel or which of Herman’s actions did you find disturbing or emotionally difficult to read? Why might the author have included these episodes in the novel? Did these disturbing sections add to your understanding of Herman’s character?
10. Most of *Immigrant Soldier* is told from a single point of view – Herman’s. Almost all scenes have Herman present and tell only what he would see and hear. Where did the author describe a scene which Herman does not witness? Did the change in point of view bother you? Would you have liked there to be more scenes that showed something Herman did not take part in?
11. What main ideas – themes—does *Immigrant Soldier* explore? How are these ideas reinforced? Where does the author use symbolism or foreshadowing to add to the significance of the main ideas? Which passages do you find particularly insightful or profound? Which passages seem to illustrate the novel’s theme?
12. *Immigrant Soldier* is closely based on a true story. Describe how this may or may not have increased your interest in reading it and/or distracted you. Identify passages you know are true and those you think are the author’s creation.
13. What did you learn from *Immigrant Soldier* to add to your understanding and previous knowledge of WWII and the Holocaust?
14. The plot of *Immigrant Soldier* stretches over eight years. Did you find the ending justified and satisfying? Why or why not? If not, how would you change it?