

1. Daniel refers to the Night of Crystal, also called the Night of Broken Glass. What happened? Was it just in one place or many? How do you think Daniel escaped this night?
2. Daniel's ship is refused in both the United States and Canada before heading to Havana, Cuba. Do some research. Why were German refugees refused entry to the United States at this time? Do you think the same thing would happen today?
3. At first Daniel refuses to give up his heavy coat. What could the coat symbolize for Daniel?
4. Daniel's parents tell him they will meet him at the Statue of Liberty in NY. Even if his parents made it out of Germany, how difficult do you think this might be? Are there any stories of families reuniting after the end of the war?
5. On page 32 Daniel writes, "Some words can be understood/without knowing/the language." What does he mean? Give an example from something outside of this book.
6. Music threads through the book. How is music a universal language? Why is it important to Daniel?
7. Daniel decides, "that improvising/is the music/for me." He refers to "decimar" on page 109. How does this fit Daniel and his life? What style would be yours?
8. David says, "I was taught that questions/are just as important as answers." What does he mean? How does that relate to what is happening in Europe at the time of the novel?
9. The novel is told in free verse. Write a poem from the point of view of the new young Daniel who the elder Daniel chooses to mentor.
10. The characters in the book are invented, although the history is true. A variety of real people/companies/places are mentioned. Choose one and find out more information and see if they really were in Cuba at this time. Hershey chocolate company, Ernest Hemingway, Ernesto Lucuona, or Isla de Pinos.
11. On page 117, Daniel writes about, "... a strange/twist of fate." What does he mean? Try to relate this idea to something in your experience.
12. Paloma helps the refugees in a variety of ways. Why do you think she risks the wrath of her father to do this?
13. Why do you think Paloma likes her birds so much? What do they represent?
14. Cuba's climate is mentioned several times in the book. Find out what you can about the geography and climate of Cuba. Is it portrayed accurately in the book?
15. Why was Cuba worried about Nazi spies? Were any Nazi spies ever found in Cuba during WWII?
16. Write an epilog telling where Daniel and Paloma are and what they are doing in ten years.

Discussion questions prepared by Patti Tjomsland, Library Media Specialist.