



TALKING POINTS

One Day In Oradour

Helen Watts (A&C Black, ISBN 978-1-4081-8201-7)

1. As the Epilogue explains, *One Day In Oradour* is based on a true story and contains many factual details about the massacre which took place on 10th June 1944. Do you think the author was right not to 'shy away from revealing the true extent of the SS soldiers' cruelty'? Why/why not?
2. What do you think are the novel's main themes?
3. Why do you think the author chose to focus on the characters of seven-year-old Alfred Fournier and the SS Commander, Gustav Dietrich?
4. Besides Alfred Fournier and Gustav Dietrich, which character or characters did you find interesting and why?
5. Can you find three phrases or sentences in Chapter 6 which provide clues about the character of Gustav Dietrich's father, Otto?
6. In Chapter 9, Dietrich recollects a family picnic from his childhood.
 - (a) What does this episode tell us about him?
 - (b) Why do you think the author chose to place this scene just before the German troops' arrival in Oradour?
7. What is the significance of the stranger who Alfred sees having his hair cut in Jean Neville's barber shop on the day before the massacre? (Chapter 3)
8. Just after Sylvie Fournier first sees the German troops arriving in the village (Chapter 11), she bumps into Patric Depaul and tells him about her 'family pact'. Why didn't Sylvie keep that promise?
9. Alfred Fournier was one of just a handful of people who chose not to obey the Germans' order to assemble in the fairground. If you were in Oradour on the afternoon of 10th June 1944 when the Germans came, what would you have done? Use evidence from the text to justify and explain your decision.
10. Do you think that Gustav Dietrich deserved to be court martialled for his actions at Oradour on 10th June 1944? Why/why not?
11. Alfred Fournier and Gustav Dietrich meet just once, when Alfred pretends to be dead in the cornfield. From that scene, and from what we discover at the end of the book when Dietrich is dying, what do we learn about (a) Alfred, and (b) Gustav Dietrich?
12. What is the significance of the figure in the fog, which Gustav sees at the end of Chapters 6 and 26?