

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

A White Wind Blew by James Markert



1. At one point in the novel, Herman says, “I’m like you, Father. I have secrets.” Discuss the many characters who reveal secrets throughout the story.
2. At the end of the novel, Wolfgang’s future is left open for interpretation. Would he be more suited to remain a doctor or become a priest?
3. What do you think about the themes of fate and coincidence in the story, specifically with the musicians, McVain, and Wolfgang?
4. As an alternative to medicine and science, music is portrayed as a healing influence. Are there times in your life in which music may have had a similar impact?
5. It was a common belief that Prohibition caused more problems than it solved, and crime was a major example. What role did Prohibition have in the plot of the novel?
6. What role did racism play in Wolfgang’s motivations?
7. What are the influences Rose had on Wolfgang’s life, both before and after her death?
8. Many of Wolfgang’s decisions, from childhood to adulthood, stem from his curiosities of the afterlife. What do you think about the question Wolfgang asked his mother soon after his father died: “Where do we go when we die?”
9. What are the influences of faith in the novel, both positive and negative?
10. Because of the dire circumstances on the Waverly hillside, confessions (whether official or not) play a major role in the story. Which character has the biggest sin to confess?

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11. Which character changed the most from the beginning of the novel to the end?
12. Wolfgang's father introduced him to music at an early age, but it was Rose who planted the seed of musical healing during their time with the soldiers at Camp Taylor. Reflect on a time in your life when someone influenced you to do good things for others.
13. Who is the main villain in the novel? McVain? Barker? Disease? Racism? Other?
14. What do you think about McVain as a sympathetic character, despite his shortcomings?
15. During the height of the TB epidemic, Waverly Hills was viewed by the rest of the city as something akin to a leper colony. Discuss more modern diseases, illnesses, and epidemics that carry the same stigma that TB had in its time. Was it similar to AIDS? Others?
16. In a sense, Waverly could be viewed as a city within a city. Discuss the pros and cons of its isolation.
17. Wolfgang's father never fulfilled his dreams as a musician. How does this failure influence Wolfgang's musical quest at Waverly?
18. Who was "healed" the most by the rooftop performance at the end of the book?
19. Aspects of our personalities, especially our fears, are oftentimes forged by childhood memories. Wolfgang witnessed the horrific death of his father, only to learn the truth of what he had seen, tragically, years after the fact. Discuss a time in your childhood that you may have seen something you didn't understand.

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20. How do hope and redemption play a role in the novel?
21. Two women were pregnant during the story: Mary Sue, who delivers a healthy baby, and nurse Rita, who commits suicide out of fear. What were the fears of the time as they pertained to bringing a new life into a world of incurable disease?
22. McVain and Wolfgang had a strained relationship. How are they similar? How are they different? How did Wolfgang's learning about McVain's tragedy during the battle of Chateau Thierry change these opinions?
23. At one point, McVain jokingly mentions Wolfgang's fear of having two wives in heaven. Discuss Wolfgang's relationships with both Susannah and Rose.
24. If you were a patient inside Waverly's walls, how would you have been involved with the choir and the orchestra?
25. In a movie, what actors would you cast for the various characters?
26. Waverly Hills is widely considered one of the most haunted buildings in the world, even eighty years after the story takes place. If the spirits did still roam the solarium porches, which character in the novel would you most want to meet? Where? What would you discuss?