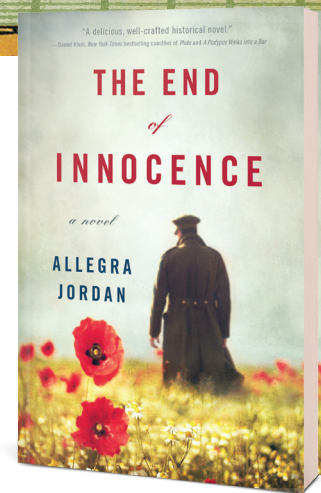


•Reading Group Guide•

The End of Innocence

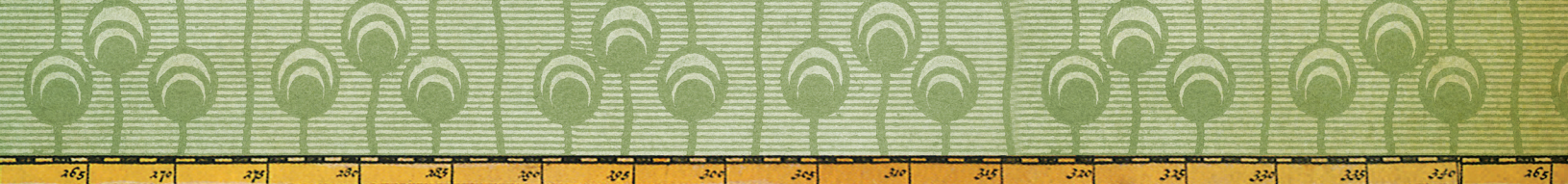
By Allegra Jordan



1. In the beginning of the novel, Professor Copeland states, “There is loss in this world, and we shall feel it, if not today, then tomorrow, or the week after that....But there is also something equal to loss that you must not forget. There is an irrepressible renewal of life that we can no more stop than blot out the sun. This is a good and encouraging thought.” Do you believe Copeland’s point of view that this is encouraging? Discuss how this theme emerges throughout the novel.
2. Riley is a handsome British playboy. Many people find this type of young man very charming. Why? What are his redeeming features?
3. What does Helen find so lovely and refreshing in Wils Brandl? What does Wils find so attractive in Helen? What do the two characters have in common? How are they different?
4. Wils, Helen, and Professor Copeland believe in the power of poetry to release energy that can heal the soul. Has this been your experience with poetry? If so, what poets or poems have you found especially healing?
5. As a German who loves America and has British relatives, Wils must decide whether to fight for his country in World War I against classmates and relatives or forgo his homeland and family to be with his beloved Helen. What are your thoughts on how he handled his divided loyalties? Would you have made the same choices? If we have conflicting loyalties, what are helpful ways to resolve those?
6. Have you ever had a relationship with someone others would consider “the enemy”? How did you handle this response from others? What were the challenges and advantages of such a relationship?
7. In the early part of the 20th century, mail in Boston (and America) was routinely searched for obscene materials (like birth control and information about contraception) and its sender punished. How is America different today regarding censorship and privacy? Is this a good or a bad thing?

Questions continued on next page...



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8. Wils and Helen both have experiences being treated as outsiders at Harvard even though they seem to “have it all.” Have you ever been an outsider? What helpful actions did people take that supported you during this vulnerable time?
 9. Helen’s reaction to the loss of Wils plays a significant role in Part 3. Have you ever experienced deep grief? How was your experience similar to, or different from, Helen’s? What approach or mind-set helped to heal your heart?
 10. If you were President Lowell of Harvard, would you have accepted or refused a memorial that included America’s World War I enemies? Why?
 11. The Christmas hymn “Silent Night” was sung at the Christmas Truce of 1914 in both German and English. Some call that moment the last gasp of innocence in the world—when a war can be called off by a song. Is this true? Where have you seen innocence and beauty interrupt either physical violence (such as a war) or emotional violence?

