

# ***The Chosen: Study Questions***

**NOTE:** Use the questions below to guide you in a close reading of the novel.

## **Some Big Questions:**

1. This novel also is a coming-of-age story. What parallels can be seen between the boys' coming of age and America's coming of age?
2. How might this novel have been different if the female characters were fleshed out and fully realized?
3. Is there any humor in this novel? If so, what are some funny moments? If not, why do you think this is? Would the novel benefit from more humor or less humor, or is it just right?
4. The novel makes a big deal out of being able to "hear silence." What do you think of this? How does it contribute to the major themes of the novel?

## **Questions About Love**

1. Do you think Reb Saunders's silence was a loving act? Why or why not?
2. Reuven spends much of the novel hating Reb Saunders. Is his hate justified? Does it ever turn into love?
3. How does Danny feel about his father?

## **Questions About Religion**

1. What are some of the differences between Reb Saunders and David Malter in terms of how they practice Judaism?
2. Reuven often describes the Reb as a religious fanatic. What are some of Danny and David's reactions to Reuven's view?
3. What message seems to be conveyed about religious tradition and flexibility, and how is that lesson delivered?
4. Why does Reb Saunders want to teach Danny about suffering? What does Danny learn, if anything?

## **Questions About Education**

1. How do Danny's and Reuven's religious studies complement or conflict with their secular studies, and vice-versa?
2. What do Danny and Reuven learn from David Malter and Reb Saunders?
3. What does the Reb learn from teaching Danny?

## **Questions About Home**

1. When David is in the hospital, and Reuven and Danny are forbidden to talk to each other, Reuven lives alone. What does he learn during this time about home and family?
2. Why does David Malter support a Jewish homeland in Israel? Why does Reb Saunders oppose it? How are their positions complicated when Israel becomes a state?

## Questions About Memory and the Past

1. Do you think Danny's memory is a gift or a curse, or both?
2. Memory and the past are crucial to Judaism. How does the novel make this clear?
3. What memories are remembered and explored in *The Chosen*, both personally and politically?
4. How is the novel's title related to the theme of memory and the past?

## Questions About Visions of America

1. How do Reb Saunders and David Malter differ in their visions of America?
2. Do Danny and Reuven have different views on what America is all about?
3. To varying degrees, the four main characters view America as a land of hope, where they can enjoy religious, economic, and educational freedom. On the other hand, there is a danger that their individuality and tradition will be lost. What balance do these characters reach in defining their own American dream?

## Questions About Identity

1. By the end of the novel, which character has changed the most? How?
2. Whose identity is most fixed?
3. Reuven is constantly saying that he doesn't understand Reb Saunders. Does he learn to identify with the Reb by the end of the novel, or does he remain bewildered? What does this say about Reuven's identity?
4. How does clothing impact identity in the novel?

## Questions About War

1. What does Reuven tell us about Hiroshima and Nagasaki?
2. How do the different characters react to the news of the Holocaust?
3. Why does the *end* of World War II cause so much conflict between the characters?
4. How are war and baseball related in the novel? Why does baseball fade out of the picture as the novel develops?
5. Even though World War II and the conflict in Palestine are seen only from afar in *The Chosen*, how do these events drive all the major conflicts in the novel?

## ► Questions About Your Reading Experience

1. What new information have you learned about Jewish culture and tradition?
2. How do elements of this tradition relate to your own faith tradition?
3. How are you, or your understanding, changed from reading *The Chosen*?
4. What common themes can you find in *Caleb's Crossing* and *The Chosen*? How do the two novels relate?