



**NANCY:** I take a deep breath, opening a book about the Holocaust. I hate it, yet I know remembering and retelling the story of its evil is so important. This book takes you on a journey into the eye of the maelstrom, with just enough hope to keep you believing, just enough magic to make you laugh and enough depth to make you glad you took the time to go there. Kudos to Alice Hoffman for this amazing work of art.



**KATHARINE:** A history book tells us the numbers. 6 million Jews slaughtered by the Nazis. This book puts a face on the innocent people destroyed by hate. When you identify with a character, their death tears you apart. This. For all of our students, for us, to learn and remember, to keep it from happening again.



**JANE:** This is why we have a military—to stop this kind of evil. I'm proud of what the Americans did in this war. When you read this, you understand why we need the American war machine. What if we didn't rise to meet the challenge of Hitler? Who else would they have killed?



**PRISCILLA:** Bless their souls! I find this so hard to comprehend. I mean I know they killed Jesus, but Jesus was Jewish, too. This is such a very sad story. The Nazi's took everything they had, including their lives. I'm with Jane. Three cheers for the USA for stopping this evil!



**MOLLY:** The Holocaust, American slavery, 65 million refugees in the middle east today. These stories are so hard to hear, so hard to read, but so important to tell. Alice Hoffman makes the evil come alive, wrapping an element of magic around the terror. If we are ever going to stop things like this from happening again, we need to keep the stories alive. Just like now, some Americans are waking up to the injustices wreaked on African-Americans. Thanks to Alice for the hard work of writing this into a compelling book.



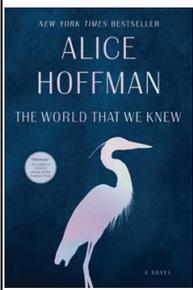
**ABIGAIL:** Yes, I'm with Molly. Reading this book, I just wonder again how this could ever happen. Reading through the pain, I remind myself that we must make sure it never happens again. The story kept me engaged, cheering on those fighting the impossible, and somehow finding a way to hold on to hope and love.



**SALLIE:** It's so hard to comprehend this time of history. My heart breaks for the children and the parents. How do you prepare a child for this? She did a good job of capturing tender moments and wrapping them in love. Parents sacrificing to give their children a chance to live, children struggling to live alone, a mother's love magically surrounding a maturing girl. Great book.



# Discussion Guide



## About the Book

Title: The World We Knew

Author: Alice Hoffman

Published: Simon and Schuster, 2019

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## Questions for Discussion

1. What were your general impressions of this book?
2. Have you known anyone who survived the Holocaust? What did they teach you about it?
3. In what ways did this book help you remember the Holocaust? What was most compelling to you in the book?
4. Alice Hoffman likes to write about magic. In the context of the Holocaust, what role would you say that magic has to play?
5. What did you think of the golem? How does magic play a role in this story? Alice Hoffman once said, "Books are the only true magic." What do you think of that?
6. From the beginning of the book, you hear the characters talk about what they have to do, in the context of the evil, things they would normally consider evil themselves. What do you think you would do in that situation?
7. Which characters did you enjoy the most? Explain.
8. Alice Hoffman is Jewish. Would you guess a Jewish author wrote this book? Why or why not?
9. This novel contained several love stories: Marianne and Victor, Lea and Julian and the Blue Heron and Ava. How did these stories transcend the evil?
10. Read over the MAMs perspective on the book. With whom do you most agree and why?
11. In what ways, if any, will this book change your life or perspective?

Listen to Alice Hoffman on YouTube: "The World That We Knew" by Alice Hoffman (5:45), "Alice Hoffman and Judith Light talk about THE WORLD THAT WE KNEW audiobook" (6:58),