

Black Cross Study Guide

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Plot Summary

The Black Cross is the tale of Mark McConnell, a doctor, chemical engineer, and a pacifist, who is thrown into action during World War II. Persuaded by Brigadier Duff Smith and motivated by his brother's death, Mark embarks on a mission to enter Germany and steal a sample of toxic gas as well as destroy the remainder of the production of the gas which will kill the innocent prisoners held within the camp. Mark is paired on this mission with Jonas Stern, a Jewish refugee from Palestine. Jonas Stern takes to the mission more than Mark does, but as the two train for their mission they realize that they have been manipulated and lied to about this mission. The manipulations cause these two men to bond in their mission and in protecting each other.

While Mark and Jonas are training, Jonas's father, Avram, is being held at the German prisoner camp of Totenhausen and assisting the new prisoners who have arrived. Unknown to Jonas, he prepares to destroy the camp and his father. Avram has formed a relationship with a young Jewish woman named Rachel and has taken measures to protect her, along with several of the other prisoners. Along with the prisoners, an SS officer, Schorner, is also taken with Rachel and has taken her as a lover.

Also, there is a traitor in the Totenhausen Camp who is leaking information to the Allied forces and Brigadier Smith. This information is what has put Smith's plan into action and informed him that he needed to send Mark and Jonas into action. The source of this information is coming from a woman named Anna and a man named Ariel. Both have been assisting the Doktor Brandt with his experiments within the camp on the prisoners and children, and both are willing to die to keep the Nazi gases Sarin and Soman from being released on the Allied forces that are preparing to invade.

As all these characters work toward destroying the camp, the manipulations of Brigadier Smith and the cruelty of Herr Brandt are revealed as well as the plan of action changed. Once Jonas has discovered that his father is alive and is one of the prisoners which he was sent to destroy, he must convince the man he was sent with to save as many of the prisoners as possible. The men plan a new course of action without the knowledge of the Brigadier Smith and the Allied forces. They set out the plans and place them into action. As they do, the actions of the Avram and Rachel assist them with their new plan and some of the prisoners are saved. The camp is destroyed and the Nazis there killed. Mark and Jonas rescue Anna and Rachel's child.

Once back from the camp, Mark is reunited with his brother he thought was dead. He eventually returns to the United States and his wife, Sarah, and becomes a lung specialist. Mark and his wife are killed in a helicopter accident. His grandson is told of his adventures during World War II by a family friend. From this tale, Mark's grandson goes to visit Anna and tells her of his grandfather's death.



Section One: Chapters 1-4

Section One: Chapters 1-4 Summary

The Black Cross is the tale of Mark McConnell, a doctor, chemical engineer, and a pacifist, who is thrown into action during World War II. Persuaded by Brigadier Duff Smith and motivated by his brother's death, Mark embarks on a mission to enter Germany and steal a sample of toxic gas as well as destroy the remainder of the production of the gas which will kill the innocent prisoners held within the camp. Mark is paired on this mission with Jonas Stern, a Jewish refugee from Palestine. Jonas Stern takes to the mission more than Mark does, but as the two train for their mission, they realize that they have been manipulated and lied to about this mission. The manipulations cause these two men to bond in their mission and in protecting each other.

Mark McConnell III is a young emergency room doctor who was raised by his grandparents from the age of five years old. When his grandfather Mark, and grandmother, Susan, are killed in a helicopter accident on their way to the hospital, a family friend, Rabbi Leibovitz, approaches Mark and tells him he would like to come over and talk a bit. The rabbi invites himself back to Mark's family home and has Mark open his grandfather's safe. Inside, Mark finds a box containing a Victoria Cross for Valor with his grandfather's name, a photograph of a young blond woman, a piece of Scottish tartan, and a note, reading, On my head be these deaths, W.

The rabbi explains the note was written by Winston Churchill, and the Victoria Cross was awarded on the condition that it never be worn in public; in fact, it was only awarded to two people outside of the British, and the other person is the Unknown Soldier. The rabbi settles in to tell Mark about his grandfather's actions during World War II, for which he was awarded this medal that was not allowed to be known publicly.

The story then changes to 1944, set at Oxford in London, where Mark is a doctor who has been invited to work on behalf of the war effort along side of some of the most intelligent men of the Allies. Mark has been pressured on and off over the years by Brigadier Duff Smith to begin work on offensive weapons for the Allied forces, but Mark remained a pacifist, working only on defensive weapons. When he is brought a sample of Sarin gas, Mark is horrified by the possible uses. Brigadier Smith requests that Mark make a similar weapon, but Mark is reluctant. He is aware that this substance will kill anything and everything it comes into contact with. The idea of this substance eats at Mark, and he confides in his brother David, a Captain in the 8th Air Force, who has fought on the front lines. David suggests that Mark at least create a similar weapon to be used as a deterrent to prevent the Nazis from using the Sarin gas.



Section One: Chapters 1-4 Analysis

Mark McConnell III learns of his grandfather's life during World War II following his death. He is about to learn of the secret life of a man he thought he knew everything about and as forwarded by Rabbi Liebovitz, the reader expects Mark's life will never be the same. The story's perspective is that of a brilliant young pacifist in the midst of a world war. Mark's aversion to war is due to his father being severely injured during World War One by poisonous mustard gas that scarred his face and neck and damaged his eyes. For these reasons, Mark has agreed to join in the Allied efforts in a defense capacity only. However, when Mark is provided a sample of Sarin, he begins to question necessary evils, especially in war times. He confided in his brother David that he wonders if he should join the front lines in order to see first hand what his work really accomplishes. But it appears he really wants validation from his brother for working on a possible substance that can kill indiscriminately on contact, even if it is only as a safety precaution in order to use against the enemy as a deterrent.



Section Two: Chapters 5-8

Section Two: Chapters 5-8 Summary

Eisenhower declines to endorse the plan. He agrees only to use such measures should the Nazis use the weapon first. With no similar weapons to deter Hitler, and no protection yet designed to survive such a weapon, Churchill is determined to destroy the Nazi's supply on German soil and prevent the substance from being used against the Allied forces who are planning to invade. Churchill decides to send Brigadier Smith to attend to this and provides him with a letter of authorization to requisition any and all aids he deems necessary to accomplish this mission. After two days, Brigadier Smith overhears a conversation regarding a young German Jew named Jonas Stern, who fled to Palestine. Stern has been awarded twice by the British army and is also wanted by the British Military Police for terrorist attacks. Stern has turned himself over to military police on the condition that he is able to speak to the head of the military.

Brigadier Smith attends this meeting. Stern meets with General Little, not the head of the military. Stern provides the General with a fully detailed intelligence folder containing the locations of four concentration camps and the death tallies for them. Stern requests that the British military bomb these camps in order to prevent the usage of the gas, though this will also kill the prisoners. His request is denied and ridiculed. He is to be arrested, and in doing so, his shirt is removed, showing his torso to be covered in scars of torture.

Stern is forced to escape, running into the streets outside, where Brigadier Smith pulls up next to him and offers him the job of leading the mission into Germany and detonating one of the storage facilities containing the Sarin gas weapons. One of these facilities is located near the town of Rostock, where Jonas was born and raised. This facility is the most logical target for Jonas. It is for Brigadier Smith as well, but he refuses to reveal that to Stern. Smith explains to Jonas that he intends for Mark McConnell, a chemical specialist, to accompany him. He further explains McConnell is a pacifist who will take some convincing to join the mission, so he advises Jonas that he plans to leave certain information out of the proposal to McConnell, but that he is needed in order to accomplish the goal. Meanwhile, In Northern Germany, a young woman, named Anna is out in the middle of the night sending a coded message to British intelligence. Her message is: Wrapped steel winch cable, due to copper shortage, Diameter 1.7cm, Ten pylons 609 meters, slope 29 degrees, 6 wires 3 live 3 dead. Smith is very pleased by this information stating, "They will never know what that missing copper cost them."

Section Two: Chapters 5-8 Analysis

Eisenhower's refusal of the plan to bomb the storehouses of the Sarin supply was expected by both Churchill and Smith. They believe that detonating the weapons on



German soil will not only frighten the Nazi's but also expose the nature of the horrors they are creating in these weapons. To these two men, the deaths of the innocents is a price worth paying, yet they need to keep these plans secret as the Allied forces do not agree. Jonas Stern is a like-minded individual, raised in the midst of war. As a wanted terrorist, Stern is the perfect choice for Smith to use as the lead player in his plans, but he is also in need of the mind of Mark McConnell, which will be a far more difficult acquisition. Smith sets out to reel Mark into this attack, which will kill innocents, knowing he is about to manipulate a man into murder. What he is unaware of is how Mark is mentally handling his part so far in the war efforts and that he has been considering front line combat as an alternative. This may prove to be in Smith's favor as a way of persuading Mark to accept this endeavor.



Section Three: Chapters 9-12

Section Three: Chapters 9-12 Summary

Mark sits in his lab at Oxford, thinking about his brother and not participating in the creation of the gas. He is thinking of all the young men preparing for the coming invasion when Smith and Stern arrive. Mark explains to Stern the gas classifications and Smith divulges Sarin gas has been classified with a black cross. Smith proceeds to tell Mark there is another more deadly gas being experimented on called Soman and that he is sending someone in to retrieve a sample and shut down the production of the gas. He requests that Mark accompany the mission. Mark declines. Presently, an Air Force Captain arrived with an envelope. Inside is a telegram that his brother, David's plane was shot down and there were no survivors. At first, Mark thinks that the timing is odd and suspects Smith had arranged for the telegram to be delivered. Smith denies this and asserts David's death is a reason for Mark to join the mission. Mark again declines. Smith leaves the lab, but Stern remains behind. He tells Mark that he is a fool to believe in the goodness of humanity. Mark mentally compares Stern to David. As Jonas and Duff drive away, Duff comments that Mark is perfect for the job and that he may come around yet. Jonas begins to wonder if Smith was responsible for the telegram after all. Again Smith denies it. However, Mark continues to think over the Brigadier's odd timing and calls the Air Force base for confirmation his brother has been considered dead.

In 1944, in Totenhause Camp, the prisoners have been called for an unscheduled roll call. They know something is happening, but not what. The selection begins and the Shoemaker notices the men selected are of various ages, but all Jewish. An older man by the name of Ben Jansen begs for his son's life and tries to bribe one of the officers with a pocket of diamonds. As Ben begins to get himself into trouble, the Shoemaker punches him in order to save his life. The Shoemaker sneaks over to E-block and watches in horror as the men are stripped and packed into the gas chamber. Herr Doktor inserts a vial, killing the men within ten seconds. Himmler is so pleased he sets up a meeting with Herr Doktor and Hitler to take place in two weeks time. After Himmler's party pack up and leave, the Shoemaker sneaks closer to see that the men were killed instantly.

Section Three: Chapters 9-12 Analysis

When Mark receives word that his brother has died, he immediately thinks Brigadier Smith is behind it. Then he calls as a follow up to the telegram. This tells the reader how little trust Mark has in the Brigadier. Even Jonas, later on, thinks the same thing. Both Mark and Jonas have their suspicions about Smith and the lengths he would go to get his way, indicating that there may be a coming event in which they are proven to be correct in this assumption. The story reverting back to the conversation between Mark



and the Rabbi Leibovitz is placed in order for the reader to change their perspective when the tale returns to 1944, but on the other side of the battle.

The location of the Totenhausen Camp, being the one closest to the town of Rostock, the camp in which Jonas Stern has been pushing to be the one they destroy, is an indicator that the tale is about to take a twist. And it in fact does. During the next chapters, the tale follows the views of the Shoemaker, who turns out to be Avram Stern, Jonas's father. The fact that Jonas admitted his father was left behind and was probably in one of these camps is an earlier indicator to this as well.



Section Four: Chapters 13-15

Section Four: Chapters 13-15 Summary

Rachel, the widow of the man Ben Jansen tried to save, is sitting in her bunk, wondering why the other women are staring at her. Finally, a woman named Frau Hagan tells her that the women are staring because her father-in-law is in the women's block and should not be. Frau Hagan explains the rules and the punishments for them. Frau Hagan explains this camp is different as this is an experimental camp; therefore, Herr Doktor prefers his prisoners a little more healthy. She also advises Rachel that she is too pretty and to try to look as unattractive as possible. Anna arrives to check on the women and brings them sausages hidden under her skirts. When she leaves, she fixes her hair, and it reminds Rachel of a knight adjusting his armor.

Meanwhile, Jonas has been locked up in a jail cell to keep him hidden and Mark has received a mysterious phone call from a man named Randazzo. Randazzo claims to have been David's co-pilot when the plane went down. Mark and Randazzo meet in the lab, and Randazzo explains what happened to David. Randazzo tells Mark that they survived the crash, but David was caught by SS soldiers, who stabbed David and then choked him to death by stuffing dirt down his throat with sticks. Mark is so outraged by this new information that he calls Smith and agrees to join the mission. He sneaks back into the lab and packs two protective suits he has been testing and writes two letters. One is to his wife, Susan, telling her to remarry should he not return, the other is to his mother, telling why he has done this and he is sorry. Smith receives a phone call from a corporeal thanking him for the money and saying he felt bad for the poor man he duped. Smith then sets up a meeting with Churchill.

The story reverts to Totenhause camp, where Rachel awakens to the sounds of murmured Yiddish. She hears the stories the women are sharing around a lit candle. Rachel listens to all the stories that are being written down for records and the terrible horrors these women have endured. Suddenly, Rachel hears someone coming and warns the others. It happens this was a woman from another block who came to explain a situation that occurred. A child had gone missing. Rachel's keen hearing earned her the position of guard from this point on, and she decides to do whatever it takes to keep Frau Hagan happy and therefore herself and her children as protected as possible.

Section Four: Chapters 13-15 Analysis

This section focuses primarily on Rachel and her life in the camp, and her intelligence to pick up the things around her and file them into her memory. She watches the others to see who she thinks is stronger, weaker, or traitorous and mentally files the thoughts. For example, she has five diamonds now, as her father-in-law had a pocketful, but he spent them foolishly and she has therefore not told him that she recovered any, even though the story takes place in a time when it was customary for a woman to resort all to the

head of the family. Her time with Frau Hagan has marked Hagan as a strong leader and a person she is willing to please in order to obtain more protection for herself and her children. Rachel has also noticed nurse Anna Kaas, who to all who living at the camp is a Nazi nurse with a kind heart, but Rachel's keen observation shows her that there is something more to this woman. As for Mark McConnell, he has finally agreed to the mission that Smith has worked so hard at coercing him to. David's death may not have been Smith's doing, but he demonstrates that he is not below using it to manipulate Mark, in a way, much like both Mark and Jonas had suspected.



Section Five: Chapters 16-18

Section Five: Chapters 16-18 Summary

Mark and Jonas are shipped to Achnacarry Castle in Edinburgh, Scotland for training for their mission. Brigadier Smith advises them they are to be called Mr. Butler and Mr. Wilkes before he sees them out on their train. The men arrive at the castle at nearly the same time, though Jonas is not as winded as Mark. Sergeant McShane shows the men to their room and advises them to always wear the toggles they are provided. The next day they are taken on a tour of the grounds and assessed by the instructors. Stern excels in many of the exercises, while Mark proves proficient with a rifle. At the mess hall, other trainees take offense to Stern's German accent and they wind up in a fight. Later, Jonas is called into the commander's office alone where he is met by Brigadier Smith. They review the maps and the plans for the mission. Smith advises Jonas there are only three hundred prisoners as compared to some of the larger camps. They then review how the military will have cylinders of gas already hung on pylons awaiting Stern and McConnell to arrive and release the pins. These will roll down the hill on winch cables the Nazis are using for power cables since there is no copper, and into the camp. Jonas realizes there is an informant in the camp feeding Intel to the Brigadier. This is confirmed when Smith covers that the SS troops do not carry gas masks on a standard day in the operations. This indicates to Brigadier Smith that Himmler considers this camp as expendable. Mark and Jonas then begin their individual training. Jonas is sent to climb sixty-foot ice covered pylons while Mark studies German. Mark begins questioning areas of the mission, which he discusses with Jonas. He knows something is being kept from them. Mark figures if Allied forces have the gas as they say, they should be able to send a vial to Hitler proving it in order to prevent Hitler from using what he has, but if the Allies do not have the gas as they claim, then this mission will tip the hand to indicate their fear of the gas. Jonas knows there are areas of the mission being kept from Mark, but it is at this moment he realizes that if Smith can lie to McConnell, then he can lie to Jonas as well.

Section Five: Chapters 16-18 Analysis

Since arriving the training facility, Mark and Jonas have been separated for their individual training. Mark realizes how much of this mission that the Brigadier has been hiding. Jonas knows that Smith has lied to Mark in order to get what he wants from him, but this is the first time that Jonas realizes that Smith may be lying to him as well. This realization has caused Jonas and Mark to bond more fully in a way where they are talking more about their suspicions. It is clear that Smith did not count on the men becoming friendly with each other, which may prove to be a large oversight on the Brigadier's side. Also, since the Brigadier has been advised that his chemist has been unable to replicate the gas that he has based this plan on, it is clear that Smith is concealing more than the reader has become aware, which also indicates, that perhaps, so are the other characters.



Section Six: Chapters 19-22

Section Six: Chapters 19-22 Summary

The story reverts back to Rachel in the Totenhausen camp, where her plan to befriend Frau Hagan has been working. Hagan has been telling Rachel about many things that occur at the camp. She advises Rachel that Brandt is a pederast and to watch out for him. Rachel is horrified at this and suggests that maybe Anna would be able to help in such a matter. Frau Hagan tells Rachel that Anna is the only German to ever care about the prisoners there and that she is too important in that to ever be risked over something like trying to save a boy. Later on, Ariel Weitz comes to Rachel to tell her that Schorner wishes to see her in his office. Hagan tells her there is nothing she can do and to go. Schorner is drunk and his reason for meeting with Rachel is that he is interested in her physically. Rachel buys herself a week of time, using her recent status of widow as a reason. Schorner agrees and provides her with additional food to be provided in the interim. Rachel requests that this privilege be extended to her children as well and Schorner agrees. However, as the week passes, Rachel is not eating her new rations, but providing them to her children. She plans to ask for protection for her children as a way to encourage her to eat. An unfortunate boy's mother had attacked Brandt when her son went missing and was shredded by three of the guard dogs. Rachel fears that her son may replace the missing boy.

Meanwhile, back in Achnacarry, Mark and Jonas are continuing their training. As they watch a group of the French commandos in training, one falls through a toggle bridge and into the river. Sergeant McShane dives in after the man and pulls him ashore. The man is suffocating due to damage in his throat. Mark immediately takes over the situation and saves the man's life. This action wins Mark the admiration of Jonas. Later that evening, Jonas admits to Mark that he had wished he could have been a doctor, to be able to save lives. The two begin talking and Jonas tells Mark of a young man he killed in Palestine that was injured so badly that they could only wait for a longer more painful death otherwise. Brigadier Smith arrives at Achnacarry and requests a meeting with McConnell. Smith tells Mark that Jonas has called and demanded answers to questions that Mark must have put in his head. He asks if Mark is going to back out of the mission. Mark tells him that he is in, but he knows he is being lied to and wants Smith to be aware that he knows it.

Section Six: Chapters 19-22 Analysis

Frau Hagan's protectiveness over Anna is stated as being because she is only German Hagan has ever seen even care about the prisoners, thus making her very important to the prisoners, but considering she is an Allied spy, the prisoner's protection may be buying her more than they are even aware. Also, Rachel's need for a form of protection in this place has caused her to believe in Schorner even if he is an SS soldier. When Rachel requested more time, she used Schorner's honor against him, and for this he



respected her request, even though it was the request of a Jewess. At this point in the story, many of these characters are looking for qualities in each other that they can believe in causing each of them to take chances in people that they normally would not. The terrorist is backing the ideas of the pacifist, the Jewess believing in the SS soldier, the doctor looking to the murderer, and British intelligence placing this mission in the hands of a German. As this tale unfolds, it tells of how in a time of war people will look for the goodness in others, even when they are all scheming and manipulating to achieve their own goals.



Section Seven: Chapters-23-25

Section Seven: Chapters-23-25 Summary

When Schorner meets with Rachel, he tells her that he will do what he can, but he too is a man within the system, so there is not much that he can do. He does, however, provide her with some suggestions as to how to keep the boy from being taken as the other had recently been. Rachel comes to Schorner that evening and sleeps with him. Afterward, Schorner tells Rachel of his lost sweetheart, why he is in the SS and even about Soman. Rachel finds the entire experience surreal.

Back at Achnacarry, Stern and McShane have set up a race to see which can climb the pylon the fastest. McShane wins, and when Jonas asks why McShane is trying so hard, he realizes that it is McShane who will be setting the cylinders for him. He finds some relief in knowing that McShane will be involved in the mission. While Stern is training with Sergeant McShane, Mark finishes up for the day in his German studies. He takes a walk, and on his way, he meets up with Sir Donald Cameron, the Laird of Achnacarry Castle. Sir Donald recognizes Mark as the pacifist he's been hearing about. When Mark reveals his insecurities, Sir Donald provides him with a piece of his tartan, telling him it is his right to wear the colors since Mark's grandmother's name was Cameron. He also assures Mark he is the right man for the job; even though he may not be a fighter by daily standards, he will be when it is needed. On his walk back, Mark thinks how he wishes that Sir Donald were the leader of the mission as he inspires men rather than manipulating them as Brigadier Smith does.

Jonas Stern has been called to the commander's office to meet with Stern. Smith shows Jonas a paper retrieved from a Polish prisoner who escaped. On the paper was a list of prisoners who were killed at Totenhausen, showing the name Avram Stern, Jonas's father. Smith tells Jonas that he and Mark may not be caught, no matter what, and Jonas agrees. At this time, outside Totenhausen, Sergeant McShane and his men are landing with their cylinders. Things had not gone according to plan. There was a storm that blew them further south than they needed, they were forced to jump blind into the drop, and when they landed, they ran across a SS soldier that they had to kill and bury. Once they got the situation under control, they proceeded with their mission only to have the electrical lines struck by lightning or a fallen limb and the electricity change over to the dead lines they were working on. Because of this, the last cylinder began its decent into the camp. The swift actions of one of the men managed to stop the cylinder from reaching the camp and blowing the mission, but it was at the cost of his life. He was electrocuted in the process. The remaining men use twigs to keep the cylinder in place.



Section Seven: Chapters-23-25 Analysis

In this section, the characters are being given a deeper trust of each other as each is being provided a bit of reassurance in those they believe in or what to believe in. Although these reassurances are just a taste of what each character longs for, they are each in their way being drawn further into trust and dependence on each other. Rachel's liaison with Schorner has provided her with suggestions in order to protect her son, but not a guaranteed protection as she had hoped, but then again, something is better than nothing. Also, Schorner's revealing secrets on Soman may show his need to alleviate his guilt, but at the same time, may prove more use to her down the line in the form of protection than she is aware of. Stern, on the other hand, is comforted that Sergeant McShane is going to be leading the mission to place the cylinders at the camp as he believes in his military capabilities, when in fact this man is preparing a scene for which Jonas will be killing innocents which is against the morals that Jonas believes this man has. And in contradiction, Brigadier Smith has taken no chances that this hardened criminal will take the necessary actions of terrorism that this mission requires, so he betrays Jonas again by telling him that his father is dead when he is one of the innocents Jonas is being sent to terminate. Yet the Brigadier does make a comment that may be a foreshadowing as he states that no one is to return with the men. Oddly, it is Mark McConnell who is only doubting himself at this point, not looking to others for trust, and in doing so encounters Sir Donald Cameron, who shows him blind faith even when Mark is setting out to unknowingly kill innocents.



Section Eight: Chapters 26-28

Section Eight: Chapters 26-28 Summary

Schorner's underling Sturm has hated Schorner for a long time, and he is happy to find that Schorner has taken up with the young Jewess. Sturm decides to use Rachel to get to Schorner by pushing her to madness. Frau Hagan has warned Rachel of this very thing. Sturm has one of his dog handlers pick up her son. They drag the boy to the kennels, Rachel rushes to him and Frau Hagan grabs the boy. Sturm has Rachel bent over and humiliated in order to retrieve the diamonds she is concealing inside herself, when Schorner arrives back to camp early to witness and stop the scene. Sturm call Schorner out over the affair, and Schorner beats him. Just then a soldier arrives, reporting they have found the missing soldier's body along with four British parachutes. The men put duty before personal motives and go to investigate. The men are sent out to the plane.

Smith and Churchill discuss options, and Smith confirms that should the mission fail and the men caught, Stern has orders to shoot McConnell, and he is positive he will do so. The flight to Germany arrives late due to plane issues. As they approach, Jonas comments that he grew up here and Mark realizes why Stern was chosen for the mission. After their landing, they are met by Anna, who hides them. Stern is anxious to complete the mission when Mark asks for the whole story of the mission. Jonas tells Mark and Anna that he is to destroy the camp and kill the prisoners as well as the Nazis. Mark bursts out laughing. He explains to Jonas that if he proceeds, he will have committed the first offensive weapons strike of the war and that they are sacrificial lambs.

Section Eight: Chapters 26-28 Analysis

Mark McConnell has just learned how far Brigadier Smith was willing to go to get him to assist with this mission and why. Mark has figured out that there must be something wrong with the British made gas and he explains to Jonas why. As much as Jonas knows Smith played Mark for a fool, he is yet to believe that he has been as much so. Prior to this point, there has been a building of trust and dependence between the characters, and at this point several of these bonds are being strained by the false perceptions and misdirection that have entered into the situations, such as Rachel's belief that Schorner will help her. She has now realized that he is not always around in order to do so. In this instance, he arrived just in time, but his absence has made her more vulnerable, whereas if she had not involved herself with him, she would not depend on him so much. Mark has realized that Smith is willing to do anything and everything in his power to manipulate both himself and Jonas, but Jonas is still denying this because he sees Mark as weaker than himself and therefore assumes Smith may respect him more than he does Mark. What he is not seeing is that he and Mark are the same as far as the Brigadier is concerned. All are expendable, even Anna.



Section Nine: Chapters 29-32

Section Nine: Chapters 29-32 Summary

Sturm is furious over the embarrassment Schorner caused by beating him and decides to attack Schorner where he is vulnerable, Rachel. He bribes another officer to beat her to expose Schorner. As Rachel is walking with her children, this officer claims he heard her make an out-of-line remark and beats her mercilessly. She manages to send her children to Frau Hagan, who comes to her rescue. Hagan claims Schorner has returned until she is close enough to strike the man dead as well as the shepard attacking her. Frau Hagen then leads a revolt on the gates and is killed in the process. Rachel was saved by Anna, who tells her not to request a doctor.

Back at Anna's cottage, Mark is sitting alone in the cellar, imagining all that may have happened to Stern and why Anna is a spy. After some time, Anna and Stern return. Stern has been off scouting Rostock. Anna explains her day, including how Rachel was beaten over a private feud between Sturm and Schorner and how Frau Hagan had been killed saving Rachel. Then Marks asks about Anna and himself, and it is clear that Stern has an every man for himself attitude. Stern heads for the pylons, leaving Anna and Mark alone to talk. He tells her he is a doctor and about his father. She tells him of her love for a Jewish doctor that she worked for and was unable to marry or even be seen dating because of the Nazis. She tells him how the man was killed and that is why she fights them. Before she goes to bed, she leaves him with her diary to read over the things she has seen these men do and her guilt over not preventing it. For this, Mark is overcome with the desire to kill the Nazis.

At this point, Brandt has called Schorner into his office for a report. He tells Schorner the demonstration is the most important goal they have at the moment, so the issue between himself and Sturm must be set aside. Schorner tells Brandt about the looting and Brandt informs him he has written charges by four officers regarding his affair with Rachel. But, after he leaves, Schorner meets with Rachel to be sure she is all right and tells her of the problems he has with Sturm and therefore why she has become a target.

Jonas was unable to send the cylinders into the camp. Instead, he headed to the camp and slipped inside. He finds the women's block to the candlelight and speaks to them. He asks about their lives and then about his father. He is astonished to hear his father is alive and only feet away from him.

Section Nine: Chapters 29-32 Analysis

Rachel's hope for protection may come after all in the form of her own doing rather than in Schorner, as she believed. Sturm's continuing argument with Schorner has caused murders and chaos among the Nazis at this camp, and in doing so she has weakened their attention to protocol. It may be for this reason that Jonas was able to sneak into



the camp as easily as he did, which in turn led him to the discovery of the lie Smith used on him of his father being dead. This in turn may cause Jonas to change his opinion of Mark's ideas and deteriorate his resolve of completing this mission and the killing of the innocent prisoners. Oddly, it is Anna's endurance of the atrocities she has witnessed that has brought Mark around to Stern's original thinking, that the prisoners may very well be better off dead. So it seems these two men are destined to continue their argument, only now they are on the opposite sides of their own original arguments.



Section Ten: Chapters 33-35

Section Ten: Chapters 33-35 Summary

When Stern arrives back at Anna's cottage, he is emotional. He tells Mark he went to the camp and asked his father to leave with him, but Avram refused to leave without the rest, and so Jonas proposes to Mark that if Mark helps him kill the SS, then he will do everything he can to save the prisoners. Mark agrees, knowing he has a new conviction, but not the motive. After an hour and a half, Anna suggests the gas chamber in E Block to save the prisoners, but they realize it is too small. However, this leads Mark to the idea of having the SS go to the bomb shelter and gassing them there. Anna is to block the second exit in the hospital and Stern will be inside with the gas cylinders, wearing one of Mark's protection suits. Anna sets out to get word to the British that they need an air attack. To do this, she goes to Ariel, as he is a Scarlett. He agrees to set the meeting. When Mark, Jonas and Anna go to meet with the members of the Polish resistance, Stan and Milkos, Stern gives them a note with the coordinates that are needed for the raid. Then Mark and Jonas head out on foot to retrieve two of the hanging cylinders from the power lines. They work for hours to get them down. On their way back, Stern suddenly smells cigarette smoke and drops behind a bank, but Mark falls and is met by two SS soldiers. Mark is wearing his uniform and hands over his forged papers, but does not speak a word. Jonas shoots the men and they carry the bodies to the village to dump in the sewers so they are not found. Mark awakes to the sound of pounding on the cottage door. It is a corporal who has come to bring Anna back to the camp at the request of Schorner. Mark begs her not to go, but she has to.

At that point, Mark panics and surprisingly suggests to Jonas that they gas the entire camp. Taken back by this suggestion, Jonas asks why, and Mark explains that what he read in Anna's diary was enough to convince him. On arrival, Anna is sent to the morgue where she finds the dead body of Stan and the badly beaten body of his brother, Milkos. Milkos is alive and Schorner requests that Anna prepare him for interrogation as the Gestapo is being sent to question him and they are upset one prisoner has been killed before they arrived. Anna is sure that the Gestapo is really coming to interrogate her, but she continues to play her part. Schorner then asks her who she would think is capable of treason within the camp. She does not answer, and he asks that she think it over. When he leaves her to attend to Milkos, Milkos quietly begs her to kill him. He appeals to her that he is a dead man anyway and that he is weaker than his brother. He is afraid he will talk. Anna distracts the guard and injects Milkos with an overdose of morphia and leaves him to die.

Section Ten: Chapters 33-35 Analysis

When Jonas returns to the cottage, he is disturbed emotionally about seeing his father and that he was unable to persuade him to escape with him. Now that he expects to bring this up to Mark, Mark is suspicious of the change of heart but does not question it.



Jonas thinks how he hates that he has developed a new dependence on Mark, indicating back to the already formed dependence that he will not admit to anyone, including himself. Stern's lack of having anyone to be able to depend on has caused his lack of trust and therefore his anger at having to do so, no matter what the reason. Mark, on the other hand, feels as though he has depended on others during this war, and the guilt is driving him forward in order to become an active soldier in these actions. He can see where his pacifism has caused people like Anna to have to endure the horrors that he read in her diary. As each man struggles to overcome their past and make a changes to their future, they each come to see the other's perspective, and if not agree with it, at least appreciate the principles behind it. This is prominently shown when Mark suggests that they gas the entire camp because he is convinced that these men must die, even if it means killing innocent prisoners. Another interesting twist is that Ariel is revealed to be Scarlett, the main spy in the Totenhausen Camp, when he is the most hated among the prisoners and reviled among the Germans.



Section Eleven: Chapters 36-38

Section Eleven: Chapters 36-38 Summary

Mark and Jonas anxiously wait for Anna to return. When she does, she is traumatized at having killed Milkos. She explains why she had to kill him, and the men were unable to radio out for the air strike they needed. She tells them the Nazis shot five Jewish women and five Polish men that day. Jonas is visibly relieved, and he asks Mark if he will be able to kill these people. Mark understands why these actions must be taken, but it is Jonas who appears to want to back out of the mission. Mark asks him why the change, and Jonas reveals his father is a prisoner in the camp. Mark immediately understands. He returns to the idea of using E-Block as a way to save people and calculates how many people can fit. They decide to strike the following night. Anna is to return to work so she can place an oxygen tank in the chamber to add time for the people inside. Stern heads out to place the two tanks at the camp and warns Mark to stay in the cellar, but should he not return, Mark is to complete the mission no matter what. He has noticed the way Anna and Mark have been eyeing each other.

At camp, Brandt receives a call from Himmler telling him to liquidate his laboratory as he is providing him with a larger facility, and Schorner has a meeting with Rachel. Schorner is excited to tell Rachel he has gotten her children into a program where they can be adopted by Nazi German families and she will be brought to a city where she can be a servant. After Stern departs, Mark and Anna sleep together. He tells her that he will take her with him. He also tells her how he was caught and Stern did not kill him, as Mark believes he was ordered to do. Later, Jonas catches them in their lovemaking and advises Anna that she is late for work. When she arrives, Anna notices the guard is doubled and she sees her friend Greta hanging naked from the tree with a target hung from her neck for the guards to practice. She is so stunned she has no idea how to act and Ariel pulls her aside. He tells her that he told Schorner he saw Greta entering the morgue before Anna had arrived the night before. Anna is so appalled she wants to run home, but Ariel tells her that they are all guilty for they have witnessed and even participated in the crimes that have taken place at the camp. Anna explains the camp will be gassed at eight o'clock the following night. Ariel decides if he is to die, he is taking Brandt with him. Meanwhile, several complaints of the sewers backing up have revealed the missing soldiers Stern disposed of. The mayor and Schorner's meeting is interrupted by a soldier telling Schorner that Brandt has ordered a selection to take place. Schorner knows Rachel will be chosen and that there is nothing he can do about it in town, so he races back to camp.

Section Eleven: Chapters 36-38 Analysis

Jonas places his faith in Mark and heads out to the camp, knowing his decision to kill the soldiers instead of Mark has caused more problems for the two of them, but he tells Mark to complete the mission if he does not return. In this, Jonas shows Mark his faith



by placing his father's fate in the other man's hands. Mark and Anna's liaison is a different form a trust, but a display of trust nonetheless. Up until this point, Mark has been faithful to his wife, whom he has not seen in four years and whom he may never see again, but this is not the motivation of this moment.

Previously, when the younger Mark and the rabbi had found a photograph of a woman, Mark had commented that she was not as beautiful as much as alive. It is this vitality that brought about the stolen moment to feel alive in a time where all appears to be lost, and these two people come together as a contradiction in beauty to the evil that surrounds them, much like Schorner's view of his and Rachel's relationship, though she does not view it the same. Where Schorner sees Rachel's beauty and attempts to woo her in a way, Rachel finds his attempts at playing house contemptible. She is using Schorner as a way to protect her children, and in doing so she has endured the lie of a loving relationship, where Mark and Anna have a moment of loving without lies.



Section Twelve: Chapters 39-41

Section Twelve: Chapters 39-41 Summary

Brandt becomes tired of waiting for Schorner and tells Sturm to pick any three people for the selection. Sturm chooses Rachel, the Shoemaker, and Ben Jansen, because they are the only three people who witnessed the diamonds Sturm wanted. As it turns out, the experiment is to try out two suits made to protect the Nazis in a gas strike. The Shoemaker tells Rachel to volunteer for one and she does. The Shoemaker is assigned the other and Ben is left without a suit as a control subject. Schorner arrives and tells Brandt where he discovered the missing soldiers and requests they place a full alert. Sturm is sent away for this reason. Anna has witnessed the entire event from an observation window, and then races home to warn the men of the search issued. At Anna's cottage, Mark and Jonas are practicing in their own suits when a car pulls up and a woman winds up sitting on the doorstep until Anna arrives home. This woman is her sister, a Nazi royal. Sabine makes fuss over the lack of social life in Berlin as her reason for visiting. Jonas threatens to kill the woman, but winds up tying her up in the basement instead, but during the struggle, another car arrives. This one is carrying Ariel Weitz, coming to warn Anna the search has been called off because in the search Sturm found cargo parachutes and is returning to the camp. Mark and Jonas recognize Ariel as Scarlett and question him. He tells them the lab is being dismantled. Realizing they are running out of options and time, Stern decides to enter the camp as an SD officer making a prison inspection, and he asks Ariel to booby-trap the Nazi Shelter. Before he leaves, he reminds Mark to wait for ten of eight to start the attack if need be, and if he has not returned, do not consider him.

Jonas enters the camp as an SD Officer and informs the guard he is there to make an arrest and to inform no one else. He heads to the Jewish women's area and tells the sentry the same thing. Jonas tells the women the plan and that they must chose who will live and who will not. An older woman compares it to a sinking ship with the E-Block as the lifeboat, therefore children and young women first. As they discuss it, Avram firmly declines his son's offer to take him out, saying that he can take a child instead. Avram requests Jonas take out Rachel's daughter, bring her to his wife and let her live. Both Rachel and Avram give Jonas two diamonds each to pay for the child's passage into Israel. Just before Rachel hands over her daughter, they notice five men standing between them and E-Block. Jonas kills the sentry and has his father wear the clothes in order to guide the women and he gives Rachel his dagger. He then leaves and approaches these men, Sturm and his men. He knows he will probably die, but he proceeds anyway.

Section Twelve: Chapters 39-41 Analysis

At this point in the tale, all the characters are about to move forward with their own internal plans which will not follow the progression that was mapped out for them. Sturm



attempts to attack Schorner by choosing Rachel for Brand's experiment, only to have the experiment be one in which she will not be injured, thus not only fully tipping his hand as to his plans, but failing at his objective in them. Also, Mark and Jonas have encountered new problem with the appearance of Anna's sister. Oddly, it is due to Anna's sister, and her position in Nazi royalty, that Anna was given the position at the camp and also the reason that Anna was overlooked as the possible spy. It is this complication that solidifies that Anna must be taken out of the country once the mission is completed. Also, when Jonas is on his own within the camp, he is forced to confront Sturm and his men, knowing he is walking into a situation in which he most likely will not survive. This is again another example of the plans made by the characters which will not play out accordingly. These plans that have now been placed into action and have gone off the path predicted for them are what will test the convictions of the characters in their upcoming actions, and in doing so, will strengthen the depth of the plot in that the characters have to now show the resolve of their mission.



Section 13: Chapters 42-45

Section 13: Chapters 42-45 Summary

Jonas marches up the SS soldiers, using boldness to cover his lie. He yells at the men for not saluting a senior officer. Taking the men by surprise, Jonas tells Sturm he is there to arrest Schorner, which excites Sturm. Jonas requests all of Sturm's men to accompany him except one, whom he advises to watch the wooded fence. Stern and the other men march directly to Schorner's office and Stern proceeds with the act of arresting Schorner, but is quickly denounced as a fake under Schorner's keen eye. Schorner takes Jonas to his office for questioning. He confirms with Berlin that Jonas is a fraud and leaves him to Sturm for interrogation while he goes to the village for Anna. Schorner admits to having overlooked Anna as a possible traitor as she is the sister of a well-known Nazi royal. Ariel leaves Brandt's office to prepare for the attack and is called over by a sentry. Not wanting to appear suspicious, Ariel approaches the man, only to discover it is Avram Stern. Avram remembered the tears in Ariel's eyes and realizes that Ariel must be a spy. Avram reveals his son has been taken and must be freed in order for the attack to succeed. Avram then heads off to the E-Block and kills the guard left behind, while Ariel heads to free Jonas.

Back at the cottage, Anna has an intuition something is wrong, so when they see the two sets of lights coming, she immediately knows they are about to be caught. As the soldiers break in her door, she throws two grenades into the Nazi truck and Mark drives them away. Anna's sister, Sabine, reveals there are two men, that one is an American and that they talked about the transformer and gas. Schorner realizes what is about to happen and follows the car to the power station. Mark and Anna suit up on the drive and Mark finds the climbing gear, just as Jonas had told him. He begins the climb when he sees the lights of the car and truck coming for them. Anna climbs into the car and takes off, and Mark realizes she will die for this mission. The bombers are only six miles out and are unsure that they are correct in their location, so they send down a flare in order to see below. In doing so, they light the entire area. Using this light, Mark is able to fire five rounds at the car chasing Anna and he manages to blow the gas tank, which in turn signals to the bombers above that they are in the proper location for deploying the bombs. In the interim, Mark releases the gas cylinders and shorts out the live wires with his gun, causing the transformer to blow, frightening the man below. Meanwhile, Jonas has taken a terrible beating and struggles to remain conscious. Just as Sturm sends a man out for boiling water, the man is shot dead. Ariel is standing in the doorway, wearing a protection suit. Two large explosions go off and Sturm breaks through a window. Ariel fires after him and hits the man, but he gets up and keeps going. When an explosion tears through the wall, killing one man and injuring another, the SS troops file outside to see smoke coming from near the dog kennels and go to investigate. The first men into the area are killed by the poisonous gas. Schorner watches the arc of fire roll up the power lines and head for the pylon. He starts firing his gun toward the sky as Mark pulls the final cylinder free and grabs hold. He and the cylinder head to the camp at a great speed when the sky bursts into flames of the bombs being dropped.



Section 13: Chapters 42-45 Analysis

Jonas's determination to save his father is set and that of his father as well. As both men set out to do as they believe is the best course of action in saving each other, it is their connection which forces each to alter their actions from the intended plan, and in actuality to truly save each other. Jonas's capture is reminiscent of the interrogation that Rachel had put him through in order to gain the trust of the women. This is an important moment, showing the reader that no one in this tale is trusted by any other characters, and therefore highlighting the relationship developing between Jonas and Mark. This is showing that the trust between these two men is not only remarkable in the situation of these men, but also it foreshadows what this relationship will come to mean in the mission, as well as the lives of these men. In an opposing situation, Ariel, who was a most trusted of Brandt's associates, comes to reveal his hatred and destructive nature in his betrayal of the Nazi Party and of Brandt himself. This displays a wonderful contradiction of the trust that is being developed between Mark and Jonas.



Section Fourteen: Chapters 46-48

Section Fourteen: Chapters 46-48 Summary

Ariel and Jonas escape to the outside of the facility to find Rachel waiting with Hannah in her arms. With the gas cylinders detonated, they head into the dark hospital. There, Jonas and Rachel find Ariel has killed Brandt. Jonas directs Ariel to find a plastic sheet and an oxygen bottle, while he grabs the protection suit meant for Brandt. They rush outside to find the sky lit up like daytime. Just as Jonas is about to pick up Hannah, a bullet flies by him. He falls to cover Hannah and Ariel opens fire on Sturm. Sturm turns in enough time and kills Ariel and Anna kills Sturm. Mark has used his toggle rope to slow his decent and climbs down and meets up with Jonas and Anna. They decide to split up. Anna is to take the car to the ferry with Hannah and Mark and Jonas will complete the mission. It is then that Jonas and Mark realize what the red flares lighting the area really are. They are markers for an air raid. They head to the barn to see if they can contact Brigadier Smith and get him to call off the air raid. Smith has been monitoring the radio for the bombers when he hears from Jonas that they have completed the mission. He desperately contacts the bombers to abort the air raid, while Mark and Jonas collect the logs and samples they were sent for. Meanwhile, Schorner has decided to return to camp but is forced not to enter due to the bodies covering the ground. He backs up to a safe distance and watches. When he sees two dark figures slipping out toward the ferry, he knows he must stop them. It is then that it dawns on Schorner that these men have killed everyone, including Rachel. He forms a line to head toward the ferry with distances between them in order to use the men as indicators of the gas. He follows them to the ferry and he and his men open fire on the ferry that is ramming its way through the ice. On the ferry, Jonas is trying to get the ferry through the ice while driving blind, since he is under gunfire. Anna tries to pull Hannah to safety and is hit. The bullet throws Anna overboard and Mark jumps in after her. He finally reaches her and pulls her to the side of the boat, holding onto the side instead of boarding. Schorner's men begin to fall around him and he too falls to his death on the riverbank due to the gas.

Section Fourteen: Chapters 46-48 Analysis

Ariel's betrayal has come to full circle in that he has not only destroyed Brandt, but in his process has gone from the victim to the executioner, and finally to the victim again, inking his death. This is very symbolic, as it demonstrates the well of guilt that has built up in Ariel and how he had envisioned that he would never escape the camp, even if he were to physically do so. In a moment where the reader believes that Brigadier Smith will risk these men their lives, he comes through and calls off the bombers that are raiding the camp, thereby showing that he is in fact an ally rather than a man of manipulations only. It is important to show the nature of the man and also his belief that this mission was a high importance to him. Although he was willing to risk the lives of these men, the prisoners and his spies inside, this action shows the nature of his intent.



Section Fifteen: Chapter 49 and Epilogue

Section Fifteen: Chapter 49 and Epilogue Summary

Jonas is speeding through the countryside and slowing only to coast through the towns. They unwrap themselves and reach their destination, where they are to find an inflatable dinghy. Instead, Jonas drives to the docks, and still in his SD uniform, demands the fastened boat. The man complies. When the man sees Anna and Hannah, he becomes suspicious. Jonas tells the man that they are the mistress and child of Himmler and he is their bodyguard. He takes the boat out into open waters. Back at Totenhause, Avram and the women have stayed in the E-Block for an hour and twenty minutes and they are tired. He makes his way to a window and sees a dog outside, standing and alive. He shoots out the window. Once outside, he instructs the best German speaking to dress in the clothes of the SS soldiers and sends ten to look for a truck to take the group to Poland in search of resistance. He begins to search for money and Rachel comes along. He tells Rachel that he is going another way. He is going into the village to try to escape to Palestine, but he needs money to do it. Rachel reveals she still has three diamonds left and she wants to go with him. He agrees and has her dress in an SS uniform.

Jonas is out in the open waters when he signals for the submarine that was to pick them up. There is no reply. They begin to believe Smith left them when the submarine rises and the men are confirmed by their code names. The Captain refuses to allow Anna and Hannah on board. Jonas threatens to blow up the boat, forcing the captain to take them on based on the laws of the sea. The captain takes them aboard, but states he must put them off in Sweden due to his orders if he can receive permission from Smith, which Smith declines. Mark reaches into his pocket and threatens the entire ship with Soman gas sample, and the Captain concedes.

Brigadier Smith and David greet Mark, Jonas, Anna, and Hannah at the end of the mission. Once Mark is told that David was unaware that Mark thought he was dead, Mark punches Smith.

The story then comes back to the present time and Rabbi Leibovitz clarifies the rest of the tale. He tells the young Mark that Rachel made it to Palestine and she and Jonas raised her children together. Jonas had died years before, and Anna was currently living in New York. The rabbi suggests that Mark take a trip to visit her and tell her of the accident. Mark agrees and travels to meet this woman, whom his grandfather had loved. When he meets her, he notices a photograph of his grandfather, similar to the one he had seen of Anna in the box. He realizes that they had taken the photos of each other when they thought that the photos would be all that survived of them.



Section Fifteen: Chapter 49 and Epilogue Analysis

In the completion of the mission, Jonas and Mark threaten to destroy the submarine that is to take them to safety, revealing how their trust in each other has come to a level in which that they are willing to kill to save each other and Anna. This is parallel of the action of Brigadier's stance at the beginning of the tale. This also bring the reader to a deeper understanding of the Brigadier and endears a character that until this point has been displayed as cold and callus. The Epilogue of the tale really ties up the loose ends as to what happened to the characters after the mission was completed, but also brings the reader back to the beginning, where the tale was being told to Mark's grandson, and how the rabbi fit into the picture of the Mark's death. It explains as to why this man was so trusted to Mark and how he has come to know the story of the mission so well. Primarily, this brings the closure that the reader and Mark's grandson seek.



Characters

Mark Cameron McConnell

Mark McConnell was born and raised in Georgia. His father was injured during World War One with mustard gas that left him blind, and this has caused Mark to pursue a medical career. He holds a Masters degree in chemical engineering. Mark was invited to assist war efforts at Oxford in London and accepted on the condition that he would work in a defense capacity only. When he is provided a sample of Sarin, Mark refuses to duplicate or create something as deadly for counter measures against the Nazis. This decision weighs heavily on him, so much so that he seeks out his brother regarding the matter, when even speaking of this is illegal. His brother advises him to create the gas. He later learns the Nazis have exceeded the Sarin gas with Soman and are testing this on the Jewish prisoners, so he is sent to a prisoner camp in Germany, along with Jonas Stern, to destroy the camp and kill everyone there, including the prisoners.

Mark is convinced there must be another way for them to complete this mission. Mark eventually winds up completing the mission that was requested by the British and, in doing so, prevents the use of Sarin gas on the Allied forces that were invading. Due to his bravery, he was awarded the Victoria Cross by the British government, but he was unable to ever let any one know that he had received this award, or what he had done to receive it, as he was not to have been involved. Mark lives out his days as a doctor, raises his grandson, Mark, and dies in a helicopter accident many years later.

Brigadier Duff Smith

Brigadier Smith is a man in his fifties with one arm and a warfare mindset. He has received information of the Nazi use of new chemical weapons and a sample of Sarin. His friend, Winston Churchill, has entrusted Duff to find a way to prevent the Nazis from using this chemical against the Allied Forces. He has spoken to Mark McConnell for years on the matter of creating offensive weapons but has been declined. He clearly admires McConnell's mind but fully believes in sacrificing a few people in order to save many in the times of war. In order to obtain the results he needs, Smith manipulates Mark into a situation that Mark regrets for the rest of his life.

Smith is also responsible for manipulating Jonas Stern, who is also chosen to go on this mission, but his manipulation turns on him when Jonas discovers his father is alive and one of the prisoners he has been sent to kill. Because of his deceptions, Jonas and Mark do not follow the plan as it was given to them, leaving the attack to the very last moment. This caused Brigadier Smith to believe the men had failed at their mission, and he calls for an air strike on the Camp, which coincides with the plans of Jonas and Mark.



Jonas Stern

Jonas was born and raised in Rostock Germany. He escaped with his mother to Palestine, leaving his father behind and, since then, had been attacked several times. His entire torso is covered in scars from his previous encounters at the hands of tribesmen. Jonas has been awarded twice by the British Army and simultaneously is wanted by the British Military Police for terrorist attacks and is the prime suspect for three murders.

Jonas left Palestine and came to London, turning himself in on the condition that four concentration camps be destroyed. His suggestion would also kill the innocent prisoners inside these camps, but Jonas believes in his reasons. For his capabilities, Brigadier Smith has chosen Jonas as the perfect person to lead the destruction of the storehouse of the chemical weapons the Nazis amassed. Smith hides Stern for his own reasons and manipulates Jonas into a position where he creates a personal vendetta in Jonas by telling him his father was killed at this camp. Jonas later discovers this lie and works with Mark on a new plan that he hopes will save the prisoners and therefore his father. Jonas Stern sacrifices himself for the Jewish women to enter the E-Block in order to escape.

The Shoemaker

The Shoemaker is a prisoner at the Totenhausen Camp in Germany. His name has come from his profession, and as his profession has come in handy to the Nazis, this profession has spared his life on more than one occasion. He is fifty-five years old, keeps to himself as much as possible and fears every time there is an unscheduled roll call. The Shoemaker's real name is Avram Stern. He had lived only twenty miles from the camp in the town of Rostock, and he is Jonas Stern's father.

Avram is a stubborn man who had not listened to his son before the Nazis took him, and when Jonas arrives at the camp and offers him an escape, he refuses to leave the others behind, claiming that they needed him and that it was unfair for him not to share their fate. It was this refusal that kept Jonas from setting the deadly gas on the entire camp and seeking another answer to the problem in order to save at least some of the prisoners. Avram decides to again give up his place to survive in order to save the life of Rachel's daughter Hannah. He provides his son with two diamonds in order to pay for the child's passage to Israel. He tells his son that he is to give the child to his wife and have the child raised as his.

Rachel Jansen

Rachel Jansen is the newly widowed Jewess prisoner in Totenhausen Camp, along with her two children Jan and Hannah. Rachel's father-in-law tried to buy the life of her husband with a pocket of diamonds, but in doing so he made Rachel's life at prison far worse. Rachel is befriended by the Shoemaker, who witnessed Rachel's husband's



death and provided her with two of the diamonds that were used in a bid for his life. Eventually, Rachel is noticed by one of the officers of the camp who has been taken by her beauty. Because of this, Rachel becomes the Schorner's secret lover and uses this as a way to protect her children within the camp. However, as she is bedding Schorner, his rivalry with Sturm causes Rachel to be the victim of many attacks on her person intended to harm Schorner indirectly.

Rachel also befriended the leader of the women's barrack, Frau Hagan, who protects Rachel, advises her, and later dies for her. This leaves Rachel as the new leader of the Jewish women's barrack at the time when Jonas Stern arrives at the camp. Rachel has braved the harsh reality of her predicament and is forced to choose only one child who may live, but her choice is negated when Stern sacrifices his escape in order to clear a path for the women lead by Rachel to the E-Block.

Anna Kaas

Anna is a nurse at Totenhausen Camp, where she assists Herr Doktor Brandt with his experiments on the prisoners, but is secretly recording each experiment in a journal so that someday the world will know what this man has done. In order to do this, she has witnessed horrible things and had to stand by and do nothing. Anna has been also secretly sending messages to the British government along with the sample of Sarin that was provided to Mark McConnell to analyze. Later, she hides Stern and McConnell in her home and helps them with their plan to bring down Totenhausen. She has written an account of each action or experiment that had taken place in the camp and provides it to McConnell, who finds the contents so disturbing he changes his mind regarding the death of the innocent in order to wipe out the Nazis of the camp. Anna places herself in danger several times throughout the mission, partially because she has a need to stop these men, but also because she carries such great guilt over what she has witnessed, she does not believe she has the right to live.

David McConnell

David is Mark McConnell's brother who is enlisted as a Captain in the United States Air Force. He met with Mark and told him that he should help create the duplicate of Sarin gas for the British because his men needed something like that in order to win the war. It is David's death that sparks Mark into action on the mission to attack Totenhausen Camp.

Schorner

Schorner is an SS officer who lost his eye while in Russia. He is a decorated war veteran and usually a drunk. However, Schorner quits drinking so much when he takes a liking to a young Jewish woman, named Rachel, who was recently brought to the camp. He requests her as a lover shortly after her husband was killed by the camp overseer. Schorner has a genuine affection for this woman and does what he can for



her and her children in order to survive the camp until he can find a way for them to be released from it. It is his vulnerability to this woman that has caused a great deal of conflict with Schorner and a lower ranking officer, Sturm. Sturm frequently attacks Rachel as a means to hurt Schorner.

Sturm

Sturm is a greedy man who has been previously caught looting the prisoners of the camp for his own personal gain. When Marcus Jansen is selected for execution, his father tries to buy his freedom by placing diamonds into Sturm's pocket, but is caught by Schorner, and Sturm is forced to throw the diamonds out into the snow. Sturm seeks retaliation against Schorner by abusing Rachel at his every opportunity.

Brandt

Herr Brandt is a doctor and the chemical genius that created the Sarin and Soman gas for the Nazis at Totenhausen Camp. He runs the prisoner camp, but he uses the prisoners as test subjects for his experiments. In addition to testing the deadly chemical gases, Brandt also uses the children as test subjects for spinal meningitis by injecting them with the bacteria and documenting their decline.

Ariel Weitz

Ariel is a Jewish prisoner in Totenhausen Camp. It is rumored he is a pedophile and the pet of Herr Brandt. Ariel is given special privileges for his assistance to the Nazis and to Brandt. He is often viewed as a weak man who grovels to the Nazis, and as a traitor to the Jewish prisoners. However, it is this view of him that has allowed Ariel to have access to many areas of the camp and also the secrets the Nazis have been keeping. Ariel has been sending these secrets to the British intelligence to assist Brigadier Smith with bringing the camp down.

Frau Hagan

Frau Hagan is the leader of the Jewish women's block. She is a large, strong woman who befriends Rachel Jansen and tells her the rules and various ways to survive the camp. When Rachel is attacked by Sturm's men, Hagan rushes to her assistance and kills the man attacking Rachel. Frau Hagan started a riot among the prisoners after killing the man and was gunned down for it.

Rabbi Leibovitz

Rabbi Leibovitz is a friend of Mark Cameron McConnell, and on the day of Mark's funeral, the rabbi goes to speak with Mark's grandson. He tells young Mark about his



grandfather's secret life and the mission he was a part of during World War II. He reveals to young Mark the parts of his grandfather's life that the young man would never have known about. He also assisted in helping Mark locate some of the women that were freed by Mark and was Mark's counselor when the guilt of his actions became too much to bear.

Mark McConnell III

Mark McConnell III is the grandson of Mark McConnell. His grandfather and grandmother raised him since the age of five years old and he believed he knew his grandfather very well. Then, after the burial of his grandparents, Rabbi Leibovitz, who reveals the hidden past of his grandfather's life to him, approaches Mark. Later he takes a trip to New York to inform Anna Kaas of his grandfather's passing.

Susan McConnell

Susan McConnell is the wife of Mark McConnell, who he sent back to the United States when a threat on London became evident. Susan was never told of her husband's affair with Anna Kaas, or her husband's mission in Germany. She was noted as a stubborn woman who died along with her husband due to this stubbornness.



Objects/Places

Victoria Cross

The Victoria Cross was awarded to Mark Cameron McConnell for Valor of his actions on February 15, 1944. This honor has only been awarded to two Americans, Mark McConnell and the Unknown Soldier. Also, this particular honor was not given publicly, but personally, with the understanding that Mark was not to ever wear it publicly either. Mark's grandson, at the directions of Mark's friend, Rabbi Leiboviktz, found this. It is the discovery of this award that prompts the rabbi to tell young Mark the tale of the cross and why it was awarded to his grandfather.

Totenhausen Camp

Totenhausen Camp is a Nazi prisoner camp run by General Herr Doktor Klaus Brandt and is used as an experimental camp for the General. This camp is where the Nazis are testing the Sarin and Soman gas on the prisoners. They are also using the children in this camp to test drugs and the effects of spinal meningitis. Anna Kaas works here as a nurse to retrieve information for the Allied forces. This Camp is also the closest to the town of Rostock, where Jonas Stern was born and raised and, as such, it is the easiest target of the weaponries compounds for Jonas to lead the attack.

Achnacarry Castle

Achnacarry Castle is a commando training facility located in Edinburgh, Scotland where Mark McConnell and Jonas Stern have been sent prior to their mission in order to prepare. In this place, these men have bonded in a manner of friendship that their superior Brigadier Smith had not foreseen. It is also an ancestral home of the Cameron Clan, of which Mark's grandmother may have been a descendant. Because of this, it is here that Mark finds some faith in himself and the faith of his teammate for this mission.

E-Block

E-Block is the name used for the experimental block of Totenhausen Camp where the gas chamber is housed. In several instances, this is where the Nazis kill many people, including the husband of Rachel Jansen, but it is ultimately the place that Mark McConnell and Jonas Stern have decided to use as the way to save some of the prisoners in the camp from being killed by the very same gas that is tested within the chamber.



SS Dagger

The SS dagger is a standard part of the military uniform, instead of a weapon, as one would expect. It is because of the lack of this dagger that Schorner discovered Jonas as an imposter. This dagger is handed out only on the ninth of November, so when Schorner asked Jonas when he received it, the year would not be a sufficient answer, which in turn was what led to Jonas's capture and beating.

Anna's Diary

Anna's diary is more of a medical record of all the experiments that took place at Totenhause Camp, from poisonous gas testing to injecting spinal meningitis into the children in order to record their painful decline and death. It is this record that changes Mark McConnell's mind about offensively attacking the camp. After reading this journal, Mark is willing to kill the innocent prisoners in order to destroy the men responsible for these experiments. Later on, this journal is used as evidence of war crimes, and one of Brandt's technicians is hanged due to this evidence.

The Tartan

A six inch piece of tartan was a gift from Sir Donald to Mark McConnell, as Mark's grandmother was from the same clan. Sir Donald means the tartan to be a reminder of heritage, but it also becomes a way that the others identified Mark as one of the people on the mission instead of as a Nazi, and on several occasions, it was this tartan hanging from his air tank that stayed their hands.

Oxford

Oxford is where Mark McConnell spent four years working with the Allied forces in the area of chemical weapons on the side of defense. This is where Mark was provided a sample of Sarin and was asked to copy it for the Allied forces. Instead, Mark had created two protective suits to be tested under the conditions of Sarin gas, and as such, he had created his own rescue from the deadly gas.

Sarin

Sarin is a lethal gas that is being created in Totenhause Camp by Herr Brandt. A sample of this gas has been sneaked out of the camp and sent to the Allied forces. This sample was provided to Mark McConnell to research the chemical composition and try to replicate it to use as a weapon against the Nazis. Unable to replicate the gas, Mark is persuaded to enter the Totenhause camp, destroy the stock pile of the weaponized Sarin gas, and in doing so, murder several hundred innocent prisoners in order to save the Allied forces preparing to invade.



Toggle Rope

The toggle rope is a favorite utility by Sergeant Ian McShane at Achnacarry. It is a horsehair rope with a six-inch wooden handle on one end and a permanent loop at the other. Jonas and Mark are told to never leave their toggle ropes behind, and this becomes the item that ultimately saves Mark when he releases the British-made Sarin gas onto the camp by slowing the descent of the cylinders down the cables.

Rostock

Rostock is a town in Germany, twenty miles outside of the Totenhausen Camp. This is the town where Jonas Stern was born and raised. It is because of Stern's familiarity with this area that Totenhausen Camp was chosen as the target of this mission and, therefore, Jonas's reunion with his father. In the Epilogue, it is also mentioned that due to Avram's contacts in this town, he and Rachel were able to escape Germany and flee to Palestine.

The Note

The note is a hand written letter from Winston Churchill that he penned in his office and handed to Mark McConnell saying: "On my head lie these deaths. W." This letter was intended to ease Mark's conscience in the matter of exterminating the innocent at Totenhausen Camp, and later, it was found by Mark's grandson and Rabbi Leibovitz. It is mentioned that this note meant more to Mark than the Victoria Cross, as this was a personal memento of a man whom Mark greatly respected.

Diamonds

The diamonds were smuggled into Totenhausen Camp by Ben Jansen and were used in Ben's attempted bribe to save his son's life. However, the trade was made too publicly, and instead, the officer Ben had tried to bribe was reprimanded before the prisoners. This reprimand of Sturm by Schorner meant that the diamonds were to be thrown away. Three diamonds were retrieved by Rachel Jansen and by Avram Stern. These diamonds and the public reprimand were one reason for Rachel's treatment by Sturm, but it is also the diamonds that were used to purchase safe passage for Rachel, Avram, and Hannah to Palestine.

Fairplay

Fairplay is a town in Georgia where Mark McConnell was raised and returned to after the mission was completed. This is where he sent his wife Susan during the threat on London and where he raised his grandson. Mark practiced medicine here as a lung



specialist. This is also where he died in a helicopter accident, was buried, and where his grandson discovered his true past.

Power Station

The power station is the access target for Mark and Jonas to send the Sarin gas cylinders to Totenahusen Camp. Due to the copper shortage during the war, the power is sent into the camp using winch cables, which are much stronger and able to hold a far heavier weight. Sergeant Ian McShane and his team planted the cylinders onto the top of this station where they waited during the mission until Mark released them.



Themes

Manipulation

As this tale is one of a wartime intelligence mission into Germany during World War II, there are several layers of manipulation taking play simultaneously. There are two traitors operating inside Totenhäuser Camp who are leaking information to the Allied forces, but in order to do so, both Anna and Ariel must witness many horrors and not betray their true intentions. Ariel is thought to be a pedophile by the Nazis and by the prisoners within the camp. It is not mentioned if Ariel committed such crimes in order to maintain the persona or if this was only a way for Ariel to gain closer access to Herr Brandt, as Brandt was a known pedophile. In his pretense, Ariel gained access to areas of the camp that were restricted to other prisoners. This close contact with Brandt's personal activities and his experiments caused Ariel to be considered one of the most despised people amongst the prisoners he was working to save. Ariel managed to manipulate not only the Nazis, but the entire prisoner population into believing he is an incredulous and weak individual, when in fact he not only played a key role in saving some of the prisoners and destroying the camp, but also in eliminating Herr Brandt personally, even when it led to his own demise. Anna Kaas also successfully manipulated the Nazis at the Totenhäuser Camp, but she did not make attempts to do so with the prisoner population. Anna's role was imperative to be known to the prisoner population within the camp for her to be able to carry with her part in the charade. The prisoners needed to know that there was someone who cared for them as people, not only for her safety among the prisoners but also in order to cover many of the actions taken by Ariel. Anna's position as a nurse allows this persona to be seen by both the Nazis as well as the prisoners and also allows her the freedom in order to meet with the Polish resistance members in order to transmit the information to Brigadier Smith.

Brigadier Smith is revealed to manipulate both Mark and Jonas by using their family members as tools in his manipulations to motivate these men. In the case of Mark McConnell, he sends a telegram to Mark, stating that his brother David has been shot down by the Nazis, but when this does not have the desired reaction, he has another soldier pretend to be David's co-pilot and arrive to tell Mark a story of how David was brutally murdered at the hands of the Nazis. This was revealed to Mark upon his return from the mission when David was standing with the Brigadier to welcome him back. When Mark confirms that David is unaware of the lie, he punches the Brigadier. Smith, on the other hand, told Jonas, that his father was dead, when in fact it was by Smith's order that Avram would soon be deceased, but it would be by the actions of Jonas himself. This was to keep Jonas from asking questions and trying to save his father should he discover Avram's whereabouts, which is exactly what Jonas did by knocking his father unconscious when he refused to be saved. Jonas, however, was also an integral part in the manipulation of Mark by the Brigadier, yet he did not once think that the Brigadier would be doing the same to him. In this, perhaps he did not focus much attention, as he was more focused on manipulations of his own. Jonas revealed very little of his past in Palestine, except to show his willingness to fight for what he thought



to be the right side, even when he was condemning innocents to death for his cause; however, once Jonas realizes the manipulations taken by Brigadier Smith, he immediately seeks an alternative to killing the innocents within the camp.

Relationships

Mark's relationship with his father is the root of his pacifist ways, but it is his relationship with his brother that changes Mark's views and becomes the catalyst for him to take action and the mission. Mark was sure that there must be another way to prevent the Nazis from using the Sarin gas on the Allied troops during the invasion until he hears that Nazi soldiers have killed David. Ironically, once Mark is within Germany, he begins to think there were more to the manipulations of Brigadier Smith and begins to revert back to pacifist thinking to solve the mystery of the missing pieces of information pertinent to the mission. Once Mark has resolved to proceed with the plans to save as many prisoners as possible, he becomes involved with Anna. His relationship with Anna is one where he sees the desperation and fear within her and chooses to remove this for her the best he can. One might say that this is a protective relationship until it turns physical. Yet, there is also another element to this union, as neither Mark nor Anna claim to be in love with each other, but instead feel love for the other in the intensity of the moments in which they are suspended. It is this love that drives Mark to save Anna and the actions which he takes in order to do so. This relationship was also intensified once Anna allowed Mark to read her diary. The diary has accounts of such horrible crimes that Mark's emotions of protection were amplified and, therefore, also strengthened his resolve not only to protect Anna but also to follow through with the attack on the camp, even at the risk of his own life. This is evident in the Epilogue, when Mark's grandson goes to visit Anna in New York and discovers a photograph of his grandfather, indicating that neither Anna nor Mark thought that they would survive the mission and the photos would be all that remained of them.

Mark's relationship with Jonas compares to the one he has with Anna in some ways, not in the area of protection, but in the areas of trust. When Mark and Jonas first meet, the relationship is at odds, and the men are forced together by the mission; however, as the mission progresses, Mark and Jonas both begin to see areas where the information given to them does not coincide and forces the men to bond in order to discover the truth behind the lies they have been told. This bond is only strengthened further once Jonas discovers his father is alive. As Mark is now fully prepared to deal with the consequences of the actions of the mission, he notices a change in Jonas. This change is revealed when Jonas explains that his father is within the camp as a prisoner. Instead of aborting the mission, or even pushing for the completion of the mission in which Mark has to reconsider his own thinking and motives several times, Mark focuses on creating a new solution for the rescue of some of the prisoners, including Jonas's father. Oddly, the relationship of Mark McConnell III is one where he believed in and fully trusted in his grandfather, Mark, but he is then told this fantastic tale and he realizes that he did not really know his grandfather at all, as noted in chapter one.



Contradictions in Crime

In many of the areas of this story, several of the characters are present or participate in crimes that would normally convict them in a court, but as this is a wartime intrigue, these crimes are overlooked in the courts, though not in the minds of the characters. Anna Kaas has been present and participated in many of the crimes against the children in Totenhausen Camp. She has administered to the children infected with spinal meningitis and witnessed their painful deaths due to its effects. She has documented these experiments, proving her interaction, but her participation has not been considered due to her involvement with the Allied Intelligence, but these crimes, which Anna has witnessed, caused such a great sense of guilt in her that she was near the point of suicide. Her sense of regret has been buried so deeply that it is only noted as a footnote in the last entry of her diary, in which she asks for no forgiveness to her life. Yet, it is this diary which condemns many in the world court and is even provided as evidence in the trial of a technician also present at Totenhausen Camp. Anna's sense of guilt has driven her to be a children's physician after her escape.

Ariel Weitz was faced with many of the same guilts and atrocities that plagued Anna; however, Ariel sought revenge for these crimes and, in doing so, condemned himself to death. Ariel's guilt weighed so heavily on his mind that he did not consider the hope of surviving the Sarin gas attack as much as he planned to bring down as many of the Nazi officers as he could. Much in this way, Ariel became a murderer in the sense that when the gas was released he began to enjoy the carnage surrounding him and his actions during the attack. Ariel Weitz had become one of the monsters he was trying to stop, and this is reflected in Section thirteen when he is contemplating the best way to kill Brandt and reviewing the options which would be the most painful and suitable in Ariel's mind for the man's death. He even comments when he shoots Brandt that this was not what he wanted; he wanted worse for the dead man at his feet.

Winston Churchill and Brigadier Smith both were involved in the planning of the mission, which was to originally involve the murder of approximately three hundred innocent prisoners of war. In this, one would think that they are as guilty of murder as the Nazis running the camp; however, as these deaths were considered an act of war, they were not condemned for these actions. Yet, Winston Churchill wrote a note claiming full responsibility for these actions, indicating that he found himself guilty of the murders of these people.



Style

Point of View

The point of view of the novel *Black Cross* by Greg Isles is first person in the first three chapters and epilogue, but this point of view changes to third person throughout the remainder of the novel. This point of view is limited but reliable, as can be seen by the narrator reporting upon his emotions when he finds his grandfather's journal. The third person narrator is also limited but reliable, as this portion of the novel is told through an epistolary means. By writing in his journal, Mark McConnell offers an uninhibited perspective as this is a personal and private medium in which he can express his innermost thoughts. As such, this journal also offers a limited point of view as Mark McConnell is not privy to the thoughts and emotions of others in this story. This point of view is very important as a large portion of this novel focuses on Mark McConnell III's discovery of his deceased grandfather's past.

This novel is written using a fairly equal distribution of exposition and dialogue. This is useful in allowing the reader to better comprehend the individual characters in the novel while also providing a more focused recounting of the action that occurs in the novel. This can also be viewed as being told through a large percentage of monologue as the epistolary style of writing that pervades the majority of the book can actually be interpreted as Mark McConnell's monologue. The first three chapters, as well as the epilogue, are told through the viewpoint of Mark McConnell III, the grandson of Mark McConnell, who offers the viewpoint for the remainder of the novel in the form of his journal detailing his time in Nazi Germany.

Setting

This novel is set in the real world. The first three chapters and the epilogue are set during the time of Mark McConnell III, after his grandfather's death, presumably in the 1990s or early twenty-first century. The remainder of the novel is set in the 1940s, during World War II. The modern portion of the story occurs in England after Mark's grandparents are killed in a helicopter accident when Rabbi Leibovitz, a family friend, visits Mark to tell him about his grandfather's past and how he received the Victoria Cross, a rare and secretive honor during the Second World War.

The epistolary portion of the novel begins in London, England in 1944, where Mark McConnell III is a doctor who has been invited to work on behalf of the war effort along side of some of the most intelligent men of the Allies. This setting changes to that of Totenhause Camp, a concentration camp in Northern Germany. Most of the novel's action occurs in Germany while Mark works to steal a sample of toxic gas as well as destroy the production, killing the innocent prisoners held within. The people in this novel are reminiscent of the times in the fact that there are German Nazis and Jewish prisoners held in concentration camps. Anti-Semitic sentiments run rampant. Mark



McConnell, like his grandson, is a doctor who values human life which affects his decisions while he is under the command of Brigadier Smith, who is indifferent to human suffering. The time period and the location set the scene more than anything else by placing the reader in a place overflowing with racism and intolerance.

Language and Meaning

The language of this novel is fairly casual and informal. At times, the journalistic portion of the novel can seem a bit more stiff and informal due to the difference in the vernacular within the past sixty odd years; however, regardless of which time period is being presented at any given point in the novel, the language is always appropriate to the time period. Generally, the sentence construction and language are grammatically correct which enhances comprehension for the reader by avoiding the confusion that can occur as a result of poor grammar and improper sentence construction. The different writing styles are used to enable the reader to distinguish between Mark McConnell III and Mark McConnell, his grandfather. The adherence to the language of the time period allows the reader to easily differentiate between these two characters.

The language of this novel aids comprehension by enabling the reader to distinguish the characters by the style of writing used. The language of "Black Cross" characterizes not only the people, but also the time period and the prevalent attitudes as can be seen in Mark McConnell's journal which details the Anti-Semitic attitude of the Nazis in Germany during World War II. The novel is written through a fairly equal distribution of exposition and dialogue. In addition, the language and the writing style allow the reader to gain a certain level of familiarity with the characters and the circumstances under which they are presented. Overall, the language is easy to understand and aids in making this a very interesting read.

Structure

This novel consists of forty-nine chapters, plus the epilogue. There are 560 pages in the novel; therefore, each chapter averages between ten and fifteen pages in length. The chapters are numbered rather than titled. They are rather short but very detailed, especially the chapters that refer to Mark McConnell's journal, which are written in the epistolary style. The first three chapters and the epilogue occur in a modern time while the journal's action takes place during World War II in the 1940s.

The plot of the novel is fairly simple, other than the frame story that involves Mark McConnell III's discovery of his grandfather's past at the beginning and end of the epistolary narrative. The Black Cross is the tale of Mark McConnell, a doctor, chemical engineer, and a pacifist, who is thrown into action during World War II. Persuaded by Brigadier Duff Smith and motivated by his brother's death, Mark embarks on a mission to enter Germany and steal a sample of toxic gas as well as destroy the production, killing the innocent prisoners held within. Mark is paired on this mission with Jonas Stern, a Jewish refugee from Palestine. Jonas Stern takes to the mission more than

Mark does, but as the two train for their mission, they realize that there are many areas in which they have been manipulated into doing. The manipulations cause these two men to bond in their mission and in protecting each other.

The novel is rather quick paced due to the combination of past and present action. The novel is easy to read, and the plot is quite entertaining as the reader delves into the secrets of Mark McConnell's past. The epistolary portion of the novel can be viewed as a flashback as it occurred many decades before the present action of the novel, which involves Mark McConnell III. Overall, the novel is easy to understand and very entertaining.



Quotes

"Doctor, you have not even peered over the edge of the abyss."
Chap. 1, p. 11

"I'm saying I won't be the man that makes Armageddon possible. Someone else can have that job."
Chap. 3, p. 31

"...we're planning to shut the stable door after the horse has run away."
Chap. 5, p. 49

"By killing a few thousand innocents, you could save millions! Isn't that the most fundamental idea of warfare? Sacrificing the few for the many?"
Chap. 6, p. 62

"You want me to help you convince a pacifist to murder defenseless prisoners?"
Chap. 7, p. 80

"Our unwillingness to use such weapons is what separates us from the Nazis, Brigadier."
Chap. 9, p. 95

"You have yet to taste even a sip of the pain so many have drunk to the bitter dregs in the last ten years."
Chap. 9, p. 98

"It's the unwritten law of every camp: The prisoner's worst enemy is the prisoner!"
Chap. 13, p. 140

"I just want you to know that I know you're lying. I don't know how or why, but I know."
Chap. 21, p. 242

"My point, lad, is that a man isn't measured by how regularly he strut around beating his chest. A wise man loves peace better than war."
Chap. 24, p. 270

"...they play games at Achnacarry because war is a game. It is a game you play with a smile. If you can't smile, you grin. If you can't grin, you get out of the way until you can!"
Chap. 27, p. 311

"I don't think Dr. McConnell would kill a human being even to save his own life."
Chap. 27, p. 319



Topics for Discussion

Do you think that if you were faced with the same choices, you would have done the same as Mark McConnell. If so, why?

Considering what Mark's father went through, what do you think his reaction would be to Mark's choices? What would their father think of Mark's brother?

With all the terrible moments that occur within this book and the crimes many of the characters committed, which do you feel is the most cruel and why?

Of the characters involved in the mission, which do you relate to the most and why?

As there are many, please describe and compare three instances of manipulation of the characters and the results of these manipulations.

There are two moments when Avram Stern is advised by his son to flee Germany, and in both instances, he refuses. Why do you believe he has done this, and how do these choices affect the other characters?

Compare and contrast the characters of Jonas Stern and Mark McConnell.

How do the characters of Anna Kaas and Rachel Jansen differ in their methods of survival?

At what point do you believe that Jonas Stern and Mark McConnell began to respect each other and why?

Knowing all that Ariel Weitz had to endure and participate in, do you believe he is an innocent character or not and why?

Of all the characters that died in this tale, which do you wish had lived and why?

What traits do the surviving prisoners in this story display as a whole, and how do you think these traits benefit their ability to survive?

What characteristics of Jonas Stern betray the persona he strives for, and how do they perpetuate it? Provide examples.

Compare and contrast the characters of Ariel Weitz and Anna Kaas.

If you found out that this was the story of your grandfather's life, what would you do with this information and why?