

READING GROUP GUIDE FOR

EVERY MAN DIES ALONE

a novel by
Hans Fallada

1. In what way does the apartment house at 55 Jablonski Strasse represent Berlin society as a whole? Do the occupations and character of the individual residents and their placement in the building reflect power structures or class systems within German culture at the time? Could you imagine an American equivalent?
2. When we first meet Otto and Anna Quangel we have the sense that their relationship is very static. Does their relationship change over the course of the novel? How does it change? Many would call EVERY MAN DIES ALONE a love story. Would you agree?
3. Hans Fallada brilliantly creates an atmosphere of fear, where all the characters are afraid of something. What are the different kinds of fear that effect them all? What role does fear play in controlling and motivating Borkhausen? Persicke? Enno Kluge? The judge? Otto? Inspector Zott? Trudel?
4. One of the foundational fears instilled in the leading characters is based on their growing awareness of the murder of Jews – from Anna and Otto witnessing the death of Frau Rosenthal to Eva Kluge learning that her son in the SS was committing atrocities. How does this awareness effect them? What does it motivate them to do?
5. Why did Otto Quangel conceive of the plan to write and drop the postcards? What did he think the cards would accomplish? Does Otto's thinking about the postcards change over the course of the novel? Does Anna's?
6. Enno Kluge is a shirker and a gambler, and behaves reprehensively in some instances. But he seems motivated more by laziness and selfishness than inherent evil. What do you think Fallada meant to represent with this character and his fate? How is Enno different from his some-time colleague Emil Borkhausen?
7. Although Inspector Escherich is a Nazi, is he meant to be a sympathetic character? Does his character change, and what brings about that change? Why do you think Escherich kills himself?
8. When Otto sees the map with all the pins on it in Inspector Escherich's office and learns that most of the cards were turned in, he becomes distressed. Did Otto come to believe that the postcard campaign was in vain? What meaning did he

- and Anna find in their campaign? What meaning do you the reader find? Did you think their campaign was futile?
9. For most of his lifetime, Otto preferred to keep to himself and avoid interactions with other people. In prison he is confronted with many types of people. How do these experiences change him?
 10. Anna Quangel seems to draw her strength from her husband. Does she also provide him with strength? Towards the end of the novel, Anna seems to be transformed by her love for her husband. What do you think Fallada means by this transformation? Do you think Anna's end is merciful? Why?
 11. Much of the novel is about fractured families—The Quangels, Eva Kluge and her husband and sons, the Borkhausen's and the Persickes. How does Fallada use the condition of the family to express the condition of the society?
 12. Fallada seems to set up a dichotomy between the country and the city. Why do you think he places the final, redemptive scene in the countryside, after staging the overwhelming majority of the book in Berlin?
 13. At the end of the novel, Fallada says he wants to end on a hopeful note. How does the new family of Eva Kluge, and the transformation of Kuno-Dieter Borkhausen into Kuno Kienschaper represent hope? Does this seem plausible to you?
 14. Which characters in EVERY MAN DIES ALONE do you believe transcend their circumstances? How?