

“When It’s Over” Book Group Guide

1. This novel is based on the author’s mother’s life and on her father’s surviving letters. How does this affect your reading of the novel?
2. Lena’s relationship with her father is fraught with tension, given his abusive personality. Did you expect the war to change their relationship more than it did?
3. Although initially welcome in the village, Lena, Otto, and the others are soon considered suspicious. Do you think that the lives of refugees—any refugees—are different now?
4. This novel is about politics, but it is Lena’s story, and her involvement in political events is less intense than that of other characters. Would you consider this a political novel? What is a political novel?
5. Do you read novels to learn about history? If so, what do you expect authors to do in terms of accuracy?
6. Did you know that Churchill was ousted in the 1945 election? If this is a surprise, why do you think you had not known this? What else did you learn in reading this novel?
7. The refugees are all Socialists surviving with the help of The Lady of the Manor and her family—and they all become friends. Please discuss.
8. What role does chance play in this novel?
9. Why do you think Lena spoke so little of her past life to her daughter?
10. The title of the book is “When It’s Over.” Do you think this refers only to the war being over? What other battles are being fought? Are they "over" by the end of the novel?

