

JourneyForth Study Guide

This study guide is designed to help you think analytically about the content of the book. The questions that follow are open-ended, allowing you to discuss various topics and issues addressed in the novel. They cover four broad categories: character, plot, setting, and theme.

Zoli's Legacy

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Introduction

Hungary became a part of the Austrian Empire in the early eighteenth century. By the Compromise of 1867 Hungarians gained the right to govern themselves within the Empire. Only finance, defense, and foreign affairs were overseen by Austria. This arrangement, called the Dual Monarchy or the Austro-Hungarian Empire, lasted until 1918, the end of World War I.

World War I began in 1914 in the city of Sarajevo when Gavrilo Princip, a Serbian radical, assassinated Archduke Francis Ferdinand. The Archduke was heir to the throne of Austria. Austria and Hungary responded by declaring war on Serbia. Soon all of Europe was involved in a conflict that lasted four years.

When the war ended on November 11, 1918, Austria-Hungary was on the losing side.

As punishment the Dual Monarchy was broken up. Austria was reduced to a small country. Although Hungary became independent, it was punished by the Treaty of Trianon with the loss of two-thirds of her people, almost three-quarters of her land, and most of most of her natural resources. They were given to Rumania, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. Miklós Horthy [Hor-tee] was named regent, or protector, of Hungary.

During the 1930s, Horthy sided with Hitler because he hoped this alliance would help Hungary regain some of Hungary's lost territory. In 1938 and 1939 some land was reclaimed. In 1941 Hungary entered World War II on the side of the Germany and Italy. What the Hungarians had not considered, however, was Hitler's hatred of the Jews. Not only did Hitler attempt to exterminate the Jews in Germany and in all the countries he conquered, but he also required his allies to put their Jewish populations to death. When Hungary tried to pull out of the war to protect its Jews, German troops invaded in March 1944 and forced Horthy to resign his office.

At the end of World War II, Hungary was again on the losing side. The settlement for Hungary was much like that of World War I. The country's boundaries were returned to those of the Treaty of Trianon. It is during this settlement and the partitioning of Hungary that Zoli's story takes place.

Concerning character

1. Zoli says, “I have heard that you remember a thing early if it awakes some emotion in you” (p.1). His first memory is of Admiral Horthy on his big white horse, riding across the Red Star of Marx. What emotion do you think was awakened in Zoli that day? How did it continue throughout his life? Review pages 5, 12, 120, 243, and 283.
2. Concerning life, “if you are strong, you survive. . . . If you are weak,” says Zoli’s mother, “you die long before you are buried” (p. 48). Growing up, Victor appears to be the strong one. He works on the farm and shoulders the family responsibilities Zoli leaves behind to become a lazy, weak “schoolboy.” Even Zoli says of him, “he was not a coward, my brother” (p. 8). Which of the brothers is the strong one? Review pages 224 and 263. What is the irony of their mother’s statement?
3. Zoli’s mother gives him insight on her cynical view of life: “Life is a burden, and unhappiness is the yoke we pull it by” (p. 48). How is Kovaly’s perspective different (pp. 44, 61–62)? What do their views reveal about their character?
4. On pages 62–63 Zoli experiences a dramatic change. Using examples from the book, compare how Zoli acted before and after his change. For example:

Many times (such as on page 47) Zoli dislikes Victor’s anger and scorn: “I think I never disliked him more than at that moment.” But after the change in his life, Zoli is kind to Victor, even though Victor returns his kindness with bitterness: “I’m so sorry, Victor. . . . I might have had a blow from him, so hard and full of hate his look to me” (p. 222).

5. Though they are brothers Victor and Zoli are at enmity with each other. Why does Victor hate Zoli so much? What does this reveal about Victor?

Concerning plot

6. The plot is the series of incidents in the story. The plot of *Zoli’s Legacy* follows the life of Zoltán Galambos from an early age. He sees every event in his life as evidence of God’s leading. “He meant to anger me, but all he gave me was a vision of myself apart from the grace of God” (p. 185). Many times Zoli could have gone the wrong direction and sunk into despair like his father or become cynical like his mother. Find a few plot points you think were evidences of God’s grace to Zoli in protecting him and leading him in the right way of life. For instance:

If Zoli had gone the way of his father and brother, being content to live on a secluded farm for the rest of his life instead of insisting on going to school and learning everything he could, Zoli would not have gone to the Gymnásium, met Kovaly, who taught him about Christ, and become a Christian.

7. Throughout the story, Zoli fights to avoid his father’s and Victor’s fate of entrapment on a small farm, living in ignorance of the outside world. How does he try to escape (pp. 7, 14–15, 19, 94)? Does he ever find the freedom he is looking for (p. 63)?

8. Several times in the story, Zoli is required to trust in God to save him from his troubles such as losing his job at the University, being kicked out of his house, losing Milike, even being driven from Hungary. For each instance, discuss how God used a seemingly bad situation for a good result.
9. At what point in the plot do you think Zoli comes to fully rely on God, not himself, for everything?
10. A climax is the moment of highest tension or emotion in a story. After having read the book, what do you think is the climax of *Zoli's Legacy*? Was it his salvation, entrance into the University of Bratislava, marriage to Ilona, joining the Hungarian army, or some other occurrence?

Concerning setting and historical context

11. A story's setting is the where and why of the story. One of the most important details of a setting is its atmosphere, its tone or mood. Zoli learns Victor has been injured in an accident and goes home. He remembers that when he arrived, "the house was quiet, except for the drumming of the rain. . . . The blood pounded in my head; my palms were wet, but not with rain. . . . [Bela's] eyes were down. . . . Victor lay on his back, his face turned away. . . . [M]y mother . . . passed by me in the doorway, not seeing me, not wanting to. . . . A long while later Victor rolled his head to look at me. His gaze went through me like a blaze of lightning" (pp. 221–222). Describe the atmosphere of this scene as Zoli enters the house.
12. Anti-Semitism is prejudice directed against Jews. Find in *Zoli's Legacy* some instances of anti-Semitism. How does Zoli respond to discrimination against Jews?
13. Several issues that are addressed in *Zoli's Legacy* remain relevant today. Three are listed below. For each one, provide examples of how it is presented in the book and how it applies in the current culture.
 - a. Loyalty to one's own country
 - b. Justification of suicide
 - c. Importance of knowledge and education

Concerning tone and theme

14. A theme is an idea, concept, or message that is reinforced throughout the work. After studying pages 48, 63, 112, 139, 152–154, 160–161, 198, and 226, what do you think is the main theme of the book?
15. Of his New Testament, Zoli says, "I don't like history books. They're just men's opinions" (p. 40). Bootblack responds, "The Bible is not a history book. The Bible is the Bible." What does Bootblack mean? Who is right, Zoli or Bootblack?
16. When someone hurts him, Zoli applies the biblical command to "turn the other cheek"—toward Victor, his father and mother, Mr. Steltzer, Milike, and Hevesi. Because Zoli refuses

to hate back, Victor says, “That’s too bad. . . . It makes you weak” (p 71). Is Victor right? Is Zoli weak or strong for avoiding a fight?

17. On pages 197–198, Zoli loses his first love and wonders who is to blame: “Was my father, for being right, for seeing his own misery in the remaking? Was God? For taking everything away from me—my home, my parents, my hope of the future, even my clothes?” How did God use these difficult events in Zoli’s life?
18. One recurring topic in *Zoli’s Legacy* is suicide. Victor and Teleki commit suicide; Pali *plans* the act. A question that arises is whether suicide is right. Some of the orphan boys respond to Teleki’s death, “Wasn’t it noble?” (p. 267) Do you agree with the boys? Describe a biblical understanding of suicide. Support your answer with Scripture.