

DEAR CANADA

DISCUSSION GUIDE

If I Die Before I Wake

The Flu Epidemic Diary of Fiona Macgregor

By Jean Little

1. Who is the intended reader of Fiona's diary? What life goals does Fiona have, and how will keeping the diary help her to achieve them?
2. What in Fiona's school experience is the same as and what is different from your own? What about Fiona's and Fanny's pastimes and chores, or those of their siblings, both older and younger? Do you think much has changed in people's daily lives since the time described in the book?
3. What does Fiona do the second time she sings for the soldiers in hospital? Why do you think her actions have the effect that they have? Who in the family does something similar, later in the story, with a similar effect?
4. What precautions are people encouraged to take as Spanish Influenza cases begin to grow in number? Given what we know now about disease and its transmission, would you say the precautions are effective? What treatments are administered to characters in the story who fall ill? How do they compare with treatments given today?
5. Fiona writes that it seems "as if laughter and tears come from the same cupboard deep inside you." What does she mean by this? Do you agree? Have you ever experienced or witnessed something like what she describes?
6. What happens to Theo? How does Fiona react, both immediately and afterward? What explanations do her father and the doctor offer for her how she feels? What bodily reaction does she experience after putting her hand through the door? Do you think these reactions and aftereffects might be similar in any way?
7. Fiona quotes some poetry in her diary, both before and after her family has been affected by the Flu. How do her reflections on those poems change? Can you see a parallel in what Fiona describes about people's attitudes at the beginning of the Great War, and at the time she is writing? How are the Flu Epidemic and the Great War the same, and how are they different?