

Discussion Questions for *Ida Elisabeth*

1. What are the predominant themes of this book?
2. What role does the theme of personal responsibility play in this book? How do Ida Elisabeth, Frithjof, and his family contrast in this area?
3. Do you think the experience of Ida Elisabeth's childhood plays into her decision to marry Frithjof?
4. Why did she marry him? Do you think she felt obligated or was blind because of their past together? Do you think the author is making a statement about the consequences of premarital sex?
5. Discuss Frithjof's character. Do you think his upbringing made him the way he is? Or was it his choice?
6. Why is Ida Elisabeth ashamed of Frithjof? Why is it so important to her that he works? Do you think this a commentary on gender roles?
7. Discuss the character of Doc Sommervold and the role he plays in the story.
8. What do you think of the conversation between Doc Sommervold, Ciss Oxley, and Ida Elisabeth? Do think that Ciss defends her beliefs well about being open to life, against euthanasia, etc.?
9. How does Solvi's death impact Ida Elisabeth?
10. Ida Elisabeth wonders if God is punishing her with the death of her children . . . is this punishment or providence? What is the Catholic response to this question?
11. Why was Ida Elisabeth so relieved to leave Frithjof and start a new life?
12. Discuss Tryggve Toksvold and Ida Elisabeth's relationship. Why does she feel that this is the first man who truly knows and loves her?
13. What is Tryggve's relationship with Ida Elisabeth's children, Carl and Tryggve?
14. Why are the children upset by Tryggve Toksvold?
15. Why does Ida Elisabeth feel so torn between her children and the man she loves?
16. Discuss what happens when Ida Elisabeth finds out that the Braatös are doing very poorly. Contrast Ida Elisabeth's guilt/desire to help them with Tryggve Toksvold's view.
17. Doc Sommervold calls people like the Braatös "infantile." Tryggve Toksvold calls them "scrap metal." Do we have an obligation to help those who won't, or can't, help themselves?
18. Does Ida Elisabeth have an obligation to help the Braatös?
19. Do you think Ida was right in breaking off the engagement with Tryggve Toksvold? Why or why not?
20. How does Ida's view of God change throughout the story?
21. Why does Ida Elisabeth care for Frithjof and his family at the end of his life? Is this a story of forgiveness?

