



READING GROUP GUIDE

1. The king's banishment of Vashti is the catalyst for the contest that brings Esther to his attention. How does the shadow of Vashti hang over Esther for the remainder of the book?
 2. Do you think Mordecai can really love his niece and at the same time ask her to do something that is so opposed to everything she believes in?
 3. It takes a long time for Esther to accept the role that has been thrust on her. What are the steps she must take before she arrives at her decision to stand up for her people?
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4. Esther finds herself caught between her love for her husband and her responsibility to her God. Can such a struggle happen in today's secular world?
 5. In the Bible, Haman stands for pure evil. His only motivation is his hatred of the Jews, which is never quite explained. It is a given. How does the novel try to expand Haman's motivations to greater complexity? Do you think Haman's actions are believable, given the context of the novel?
 6. Does Haman in any way pre-figure Judas?
 7. At the beginning of the Book of Esther, the Jews have become in danger of assimilating into the Persian culture and forgetting their special mission from God. Is that happening to Christians today?
 8. For Jews the celebration of Purim reminds them that with the gift of survival comes responsibility. Wherever injustice and hatred exist in the world, Jews are called to speak up and lead the call for justice. Does the same call apply to Christians?
 9. Does Haman's plan to destroy the Jews remind you of the Holocaust? Why do you think the Jews have been the target of such hatred over the centuries?
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