



The Jewish Community Library Book Club in a Box Guide

Ain't No Grave
by Mary Glickman

The following questions, based on the author's suggestions, are intended to enhance your experience of the book by suggesting a variety of ways to discuss the novel.

1. When they are first separated, Ruby hears Max's voice in her head, advising her as she makes her way to Atlanta. Back home in Buckwood, Max calls to her across time and space but never hears a response from her. What keeps them connected? Why does Ruby fear she'll lose Max when they return to Buckwood for a family emergency?
2. Spiritualists and seers have had significant followers in the United States as predictors of future events, messengers from the afterlife, and aids in detective work. How did the medium in *Ain't No Grave* foreshadow events throughout the book? Was her role realistic or irrational? How did you respond to her presence in the story?
3. Relationships between Jews and non-Jewish Black Americans have a long, varied history. How have these communities engaged with one another, formed partnerships, experienced conflict, and expressed themselves around racism and antisemitism?
4. The Frank case pitted Blacks and Jews against each other as the streets of Atlanta erupted first with racist and then with antisemitic protest. The shift from one brand of hate to another was quick. What are the similarities and differences between racism and antisemitism?
5. The chief witness during the trial against National Pencil Factory manager Leo Frank was Jim Conley, the factory's Black janitor. How did the South's systemic racism affect the dynamics during the trial and its aftermath?
6. For two years, Leo Frank was front page news. What about the case made it a sensation? How much did the media of the day have to do with the trial's conduct, the verdict, and the events that followed? What safeguards or norms limit the media's influence today?
7. How did the media influence 1913's Atlanta's prejudices? What, if anything, has changed since then?
8. Rabbi Marx of The Temple hosts Frank's wife Lucille and later, Sigmund Livingston, at rallies supporting the defendant and raising money for the fledgling Anti-Defamation League. How are these received by the community at large?

9 . Do you feel that the challenges presented in *Ain't No Grave* have particular resonance with the challenges today's Jewish communities experience? In what way? In Frank's day, a multitude of Georgian Jews left the state. Under similar circumstances, how do you think they would respond today?

10. The child murder that is central to *Ain't No Grave* occurs at the National Pencil Factory in Atlanta. In 1913, child labor was both legal and substantially damaging to children — disease and on-the-job injury were common; protest was frequent. Across the globe, children are still employed in factories, mines, and fields without restrictions or protections. In the US, children are allowed to work in certain sectors (television actors, for example). How has elimination of child labor affected societal expectations for children, family structure and parent-child relationships, and the nature of work in American society?

Suggested additional reading includes:

And the Dead Shall Rise: the Murder of Mary Phagan and the Lynching of Leo Frank, by Steve Oney, 2003.

Black-Jewish Relations on Trial: Leo Frank and Jim Conley in the New South, by Jeffrey Melnick, 2000.

An Unspeakable Crime: The Prosecution and Persecution of Leo Frank, by Elaine Marie Alphin, 2010.

Oracle of the Ages: Reflections on the Curious Life of Fortune Teller Mayhayley Lancaster, by Dot Moore with Katie Lamar Smith, 2007.

The Jewish Community Library is located at 1835 Ellis Street, San Francisco, CA 94115. For more information about the Library and its book club services, call 415.567.3327 x706 or go to www.jewishcommunitylibrary.org