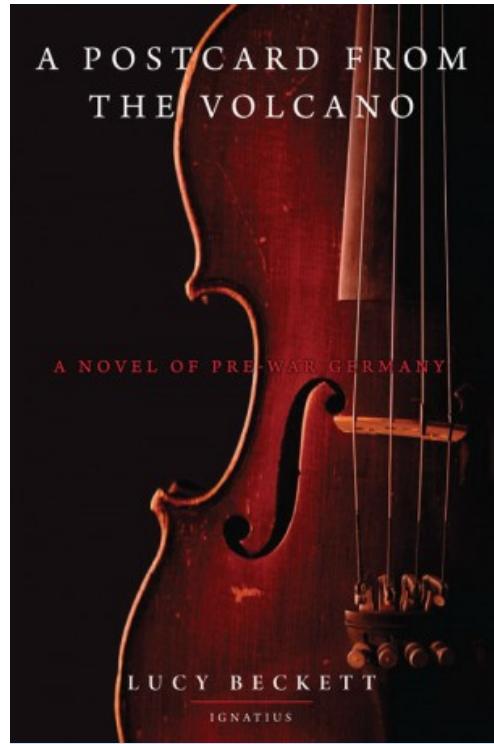


## **Discussion Questions for *A Postcard from the Volcano***

1. The story is told in the third person but everything that happens is seen through Max's eyes. How easy have you found it to identify with him?
2. The country and the city: how does the contrast affect Max as he grows up?
3. What is the importance to the story of Emilia?
4. Can you see a good deal of both of his parents in Max's character as it develops?
5. How does the novel suggest the poisoning of the atmosphere in Germany before Hitler came to power?
6. How important to the story is Max's grandfather?
7. What do you think Max should have done after Hitler came to power? Why do you think he acts as described in the novel?
8. What does Max learn from his two relationships with girls?
9. How important to the whole novel is music: music-making, sheet-music, musical instruments, what music meant in Germany?
10. Is Jacob Halpern right to send his sister home?
11. What does the character of Joachim von Treuburg contribute to the story?
12. What pulls Adam back to the Catholic faith in which he was raised?
13. How surprised is Dr Fischer by Adam's discovery of his vocation?
14. How would you describe the relationship between Max's mother and Dr Mendel?
15. What is the point of the contrast between Max's mother and Adam's mother?
16. Discuss the significance, in the context of the story, of the student production of *Hamlet*.
17. What difference does their holiday in Italy make to Adam and to Max?
18. Hitler's visit to Breslau took place as described in the novel. Archbishop Sapieha, who ordains Adam in the novel, later protected and ordained Karol Wojtyla. What do you think of real historical figures appearing in fiction?
19. Why does Max become a Catholic?
20. What does the novel suggest about the connection between music and God, works of art and God?
21. What have you learned from the book about the various ways of being a Christian and the various ways of being a Jew? Then? And now?



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22. In Germany for more than two hundred years this kind of story has been called a *Bildungsroman*, a coming-of-age novel, or a self-realization novel. Do you think the form works in English?
23. Is there too much talk in the novel?