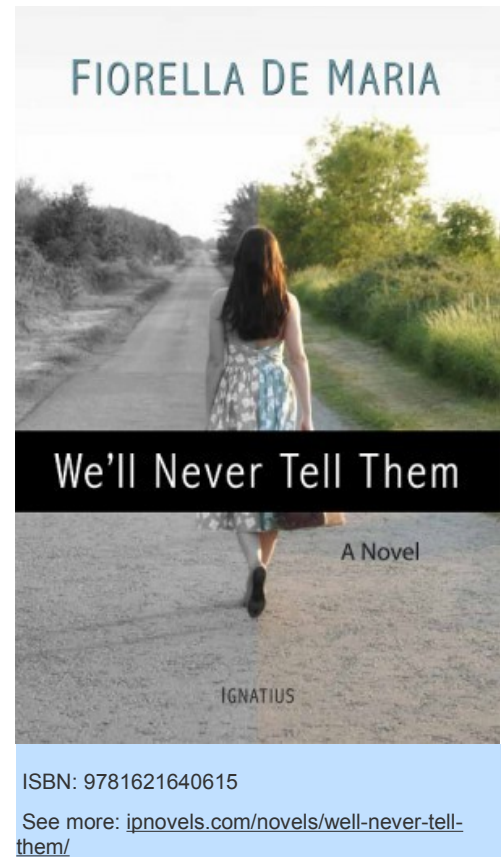


Discussion Questions for *We'll Never Tell Them*

1. Kristjana describes herself at the beginning of the novel as Sheherazade, “a woman with a story to tell or to discover, whose only weapon to evade death was to be found in the weaving of stories”. How important is the story-within-a-story device in the development of the novel?
2. There are repeated references through the book to learning about the past e.g. history lessons, history textbooks etc. Discuss the importance of the First World War and collective memory in the novel
3. The novel revolves around the memories of a dying man and at one point Kristjana describes herself as a time traveller. How trustworthy is memory portrayed as being in the novel?
4. A central metaphor of the novel is the holy picture depicting a figure on a boat. What is the significance of the metaphor? Are all the novel’s characters ‘lost’? In what way?
5. There are many literary allusions in the novel What, if anything, do the many references to classical literature add to the novel?
6. To what extent can the novel be described as anti-war?
7. Discuss the depiction of marriage and family life in the novel.
8. Kristjana describes herself as a ‘deserter’ and a ‘refugee’ during the early part of the novel. How central are the themes of desertion and escape to the development of the novel?
9. Discuss the symbolism of Mrs Debono’s cross.
10. How are Inter-generational relationships portrayed during the novel?
11. How relevant is nationality to the lives of the different characters?
12. Discuss the use of photographs in the novel.
13. The story travels between a number of locations. Why is the Holy Land used as a backdrop for the novel?
14. Can Liljana be described as a tragic heroine?
15. What is the significance of the different names Liljana is given during the novel; Liljana/Lily?
16. Are there any similarities between Kristjana and Liljana?
17. How important are the conversations between Leo and Kristjana throughout the novel?
18. When Dr Hampton suggests sending Liljana to boarding school, he talks dismissively about his brother’s belief that girls should be educated on a par with boys. How is the changing role of women portrayed in the novel?
19. Discuss the role of nursing and medicine in the novel



20. When Joseph Radcliffe is sent to Malta to convalesce, he is embarrassed at being treated as a hero. How is heroism portrayed in the novel? Are there any true heroes?
21. Discuss the use of pathetic fallacy during the novel.
22. Is *We'll Never Tell Them* a Catholic novel?