

Book group questions for 'Mr Rosenblum's List' / 'Mr Rosenblum Dreams in English'

'Mr Rosenblum's List' explores the real split between the need to adopt the host country's customs while not losing one's own heritage, and an ambivalence about wanting children to blend in but turning them into strangers in the process. Do you think these tensions can ever be reconciled?

Names are significant indicators of heritage in the novel, and signify who belongs and who doesn't. Do you think it is important to preserve what Jack calls the 'chain' of names?

Could a Helpful Information booklet such as the one Jack uses, ever be of any use? What items would you put on a modern list?

The novel mingles folklore and Jewish tradition. What do you think the woolly-pig symbolises?

Sadie bakes obsessively to remember her family. Does this help her overcome her grief, or does it paralyse her further?

Jack's obsession leads him to neglect his wife and their relationship is often strained and distant. Yet, when he nearly loses her, he regrets his behaviour and tries to make amends. Does Sadie forgive him? Can you?

What makes Jack 'a true Englishman'?

There is an undercurrent of anti-Semitism in the book, exemplified in the character of Sir William Waegbert. Why does Sir William despise Jack so much? Is it just because Jack is a Jew, or is it also that he is upwardly socially mobile and a threat to Sir William's 'old England'?

The landscape of Dorset becomes a conduit for Jack and Sadie. After years of growing apart, they connect once again through a mutual love of the countryside. It reminds Sadie of her idyllic childhood in Bavaria and she is able to recall happy memories of her family, but why do you think that Jack falls in love with the landscape? Why do the countryside rhythms comfort them both?