

Lilacs in the Dust Bowl

by Diana Stevan

Book Club Discussion

1. This book was completed during the Covid-19 pandemic. Some are saying the effect on the economy is the same as the Great Depression was on Canada and the United States. How much are present times similar to those, and how are they different?
2. Throughout the novel, there are many instances when excessive use of alcohol is mentioned. Alcoholics Anonymous had yet to develop a national presence. And alcoholism was viewed as a weakness, not an illness or addiction. Also, drinking in Ukraine is common, a part of the culture, much as it is in Ireland. What are your thoughts about the characters' reliance on alcohol to get them through the hard times?
3. Lukia chooses not to bring up the subject of excessive drinking with her sons. Yet she is aware of how much it's affecting her sons, especially Mike. What is your opinion on how she handled this problem?
4. Lukia gives up on a potentially easier life with Orest. Her children are older; before long they will leave. How much should children dictate what a widow or widower does the second time around?
5. This story brings up problems all immigrants face: dealing with strange language, different customs, and the hostile feelings of citizens who find it hard to accept differences in the newly landed. And yet, many countries need immigrants to build their workforce. How should a country deal with the opposing forces?

6. During the Great Depression, many gave up farming in the United States and Canada. What are the chances you would have weathered these times, given what you know about yourself? How much do you think this kind of endurance has to do with stubbornness, a strong will, or faith? Or is there something else at play?
7. One concern brought up by people in the book was that of economic relief. During the Great Depression, the government gave out handouts to help people stay on their feet. These came in the form of relief camps and breadlines. Lukia and many of her countrymen had a problem with government handouts. They believed it robbed people of their initiative. They thought it brought shame to the family. Today, there's discussion of a guaranteed annual income. What do you believe is the best way to support those in need?
8. One chapter is called "A Little Lie," which tells about the time Dunya told a white lie about Doug to her friend Olga. Are there occasions when lies are reasonable? How did it affect your opinion of Dunya?
9. Both Dunya and Lukia speak their mind, as they did regarding the impossible brooch. If lies are unacceptable, is truth in this instance better? Under what circumstances is it reasonable to tell the truth, even though it might hurt?
10. Lukia gives her daughter a lecture on keeping her virginity. She explains the importance of keeping her legs together so she can find a good husband. The world has changed. With the abandonment of the double standard, women today have more options. How has this freedom affected the idea of marriage and finding a suitable mate?