

Reading Group Guide

THE SAUSAGE MAKER'S DAUGHTERS

by A. G. S. Johnson

1 - Among the many genres of novels are: mystery, family drama, historical fiction, psychological fiction, character study, courtroom drama or legal novel. One could probably make an argument for any one of these as the primary genre of **THE SAUSAGE MAKER'S DAUGHTERS**. Which genre do you think best defines/ fits this novel? Why?

2 - One essential ingredient in almost all worthwhile literature is irony: Things are not what they appear to be. People are not who they appear to be. Others may know something you do not know. Irony may even lead you to discover something shocking about yourself. And irony may entail a surprise to the reader or to the character(s). How, when, and where does A.G.S. Johnson employ irony? How do characters surprise each other, and what theme emerges from all that irony?

3 - The climax of a murder mystery is usually the moment that the mystery is solved. But in a deeper literary sense, the climax is the moment that the protagonist learns or changes. What do you think Kip learns about herself and/or about life? Do you see any "life truths" here that perhaps you haven't thought about in the same way before – particularly as they may apply to you?

4 – How do you envision Kip's life proceeding after we leave her at the end of the novel? Where will she live? Whom will she love? What will become of the members of her family?

5 - Consider Kip's causes and other causes of that era – the mid-sixties to early-seventies. If Kip were writing in 2012, would she see satisfactory societal responses to those movements' struggles? World peace? Equality for minorities and racial justice? How would she feel about these issues now?

6 - Considering the book for now as primarily a character study, do you think it is effective in that regard? Does Kip remind you of someone you've met, seen or known? Is there believable justification presented to explain Stan's character flaws? Does he have saving graces that make him a well-rounded character? Same questions for Sybel. Is "Samantha the Mediator" realistic? What about the blowhard Mr. Czermanski? Samantha's foppish husband? Are these people or stereotypes? (They may be effective stereotypes, too.)

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7 - Legal thrillers/courtroom dramas are usually written by lawyers or ex-lawyers. This novel is not. Are lawyers in general represented fairly here? Do the courtroom scenes and legal maneuverings here bear the stamps of authenticity? What makes you say so?

8 - As you read the novel, do you feel sad or happy for Kip (if you have feelings in this matter at all) that she has left the peace movement behind? Do you think her new cause – helping un-liberated women – is more, less, or equally as important and valid as her former one?

9 - Are we right or wrong to liken the Occupy movement to the movements of the sixties? Are they essentially similar or essentially different?

10 - When people, for various reasons – often cowardice, often fear – want to hide, they try very hard to figuratively or literally disappear; to make themselves invisible. Sometimes they achieve that goal. Several of the characters in this novel do so, and they accomplish their goal in very different (and fascinating) ways. Which characters become invisible? In what sense are they invisible? How do they accomplish that goal – and why?