

# Buried Rivers: A Spiritual Journey into the Holocaust

By *Ellen Korman Mains*

## **Book Club Discussion Questions**

1. What did you feel were the principal themes of the book? Did they weave together well? How did the writing, narrative flow, and transitions of time and place contribute to your reading experience?
2. If this book were a physical landscape, what landscape would it be? (Or weather system or kind of music?)
3. Whether or not you have a similar background as the author, did you feel drawn into her experiences? Did they bring up buried or forgotten experiences of your own? If so, what kind?
4. What did you learn about the Holocaust and/or past or present-day Poland that you didn't already know? What surprised you?
5. In what way did her uncle's survivor account and the author's conflicted relationship with him contribute to the story? Did he strike you as a narcissistic bully or as a hero?
6. How did you react to the author's interactions with healers, psychics, and with the dead? Did you find these transpersonal experiences believable (or did they detract from the story's credibility)? Have you had similar experiences?
7. Did your ideas about what happens after death undergo a change? Or your ideas about your ancestors? Did the book stimulate thoughts or reflections on the deaths of your family members?
8. Which part of the book impacted you the most? What emotions did it evoke? Were any parts especially disturbing or inspiring? Did any bring you closer to some part of yourself?
9. What do you understand or what did the author convey about the concept of "basic goodness?" In what way do you think basic goodness can co-exist with human behavior or actions such as genocide?
10. Does the book teach something valuable about how to hold or move through extreme suffering or grief vs. avoiding it?
11. Do you feel the author succeeds in her original motivation for writing the book (i.e. helping the dead)?
12. Did the title seem appropriate? What were the "Buried Rivers?"
13. In what way was this a "spiritual" journey? Did the author's view of herself as a Jew, a Buddhist, or as larger than any of these identities undergo a change? If you could interview the author, what would you want to know more about?
14. Did the book contribute to your understanding of generational trauma and/or epigenetics? If so, in what way?
15. What does the book teach or suggest about tolerance and crossing religious boundaries? Who might benefit most from reading this book?