

### The Reading Guide

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#### Reading Group Questions

1. *Far to Go* is a work of fiction but it is based on historical fact. How does the author play with fact and fiction throughout the novel?
2. What are Marta's feelings towards the Bauers? How is she influenced by Ernst and by the events that unfold, and how do her feelings change?
3. 'She kept the secret, along with all the others. She told herself it was for Anneliese's own good. And that Anneliese deserved to be deceived.' (p.40) Deception is a key theme in *Far to Go*. In what ways do all of the main characters deceive – both themselves and others – and also fall victim to deceit?
4. 'The Jews she knew best – Mr Bauer, for example – they weren't really Jewish, at least not in the way she knew was meant by the word.' (p.17) What does Marta think about Jews? Does her understanding change? Is her attitude representative of non-Jewish civilians at the time and their unawareness of what the holocaust really was?
5. How is the novel structured in terms of past and present? In what way do the interspersed letters play an important part in the narrative?
6. Does Marta betray the Bauers? Can we forgive her?
7. 'The train has no answers, only forward momentum . . . Moving always ahead. It never arrives.' (p.311) What is the significance of trains in the novel? What do they become a metaphor for?
8. Do you like Anneliese? Does she fulfil her roles as wife, mother and employer?
9. Are the issues of displacement, origin and family history as meaningful to us today as they were during World War Two and its aftermath?
10. The majority of Lisa and Pepik's life stories are left deliberately untold. Does the author leave us wanting to know more? How do you think their lives were influenced by their origins and their parentage – known or unknown?
11. 'The infant from the photo, whom Pepik didn't remember, went to the gas chambers too . . . I gave her a different death. It was just wishful thinking.' (p. 306) What is the effect of

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the narrator's confession at the end that she invented parts of the Bauer family history and the relationship between Marta and the Bauers?

#### Further Reading:

*Schindler's List* by Thomas Keneally

*The Pianist* by Wladyslaw Szpilman

*The Diary of Anne Frank* by Anne Frank

*Kindertransport* by Diane Samuels

*The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* by John Boyne

#### About the Book

FAR TO GO is a powerful and profoundly moving story about one family's epic journey to flee the Nazi occupation of their homeland in 1939, and above all to save the life of a six-year-old boy.

Pavel and Anneliese Bauer are affluent, secular Jews, whose lives are turned upside down by the arrival of the German forces in Czechoslovakia. Desperate to avoid deportation, the Bauers flee to Prague with their six-year-old son, Pepik, and his beloved nanny, Marta. When the family try to flee without her to Paris, Marta betrays them to her Nazi boyfriend. But it is through Marta's determination that Pepik secures a place on a Kindertransport, though he never sees his parents or Marta again.

Inspired by Alison Pick's own grandparents who fled their native Czechoslovakia for Canada during the Second World War, FAR TO GO is a deeply personal and emotionally harrowing novel.

#### About the Author

Alison was the 2002 Bronwen Wallace Award winner for the most promising writer under thirty-five in Canada. She has published two acclaimed volumes of poetry and her first novel, *The Sweet Edge*, was widely acclaimed. She lives in Toronto with her husband and daughter.

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#### Reviews

'Clean, crisp and unencumbered. Pick . . . creates small moments that are both lovely and frightening . . . It's very deftly structures and the storytelling is seamless' *Globe and Mail*

'Somewhere between a book and a miracle' Catherine Ryan Hyde, author of *Love in the Present Tense*

'A nuanced and layered portrait of betrayal . . . An intriguing experiment in the art of storytelling' *Montreal Gazette*

'Expertly crafted in every sense' [thestar.com](http://thestar.com)

'Pick unties the dark knots of the past to imagine the stories that could never otherwise be known' Marina Endicott, author of *Good to a Fault*