

DISCUSSION GUIDE

I Am Canada: Sink and Destroy

1. Why do you think Bill was so eager to fight Hitler and the Nazis, while his American neighbours living just a few kilometres away on the other side of the St. Lawrence River were reluctant to get directly involved in the fighting?
2. What details from the story tell you how ill-prepared the Canadian government was for war? What clues were there that enemies like Germany and Japan were building up their own military power?
3. Why do you think Bill went to so much trouble to rescue the German sailor who was drowning, even though Bill had just killed other German crew members from the same submarine?
4. What kinds of situations tended to aggravate the tension between some of the citizens of Halifax and some of the Canadian Navy sailors? Imagine yourself in both roles — as a sailor, then as a Haligonian — and give reasons to defend both points of view.
5. Today we have instant communications media such as the internet and cell phones. What means did Bill and other sailors or soldiers have during the war? How might he react to being unable to communicate in real time with his family and Aileen? How do you react if you're cut off from social media, even for a short time?
6. If you only got to sleep for four hours at a time, on a ship that was cold, wet and smelly, with the fumes of paint and fuels and sweat, how would you cope so that you could still do your job effectively when you were on duty?
7. Why do you think that the Battle of the Atlantic might not be as well known as other military conflicts of the Second World War, such as the Battle of Britain, Dieppe, D-Day, the Battle of Stalingrad or the Liberation of Paris?
8. If you had been the Allied commander, you would have been faced with limited air power, having to decide whether to send bombers over Germany or to send them to protect the convoys trying to bring much-needed supplies to Britain. How would you try to make that choice? Do you think the commander was correct in focusing on bombing German munitions factories versus sending the Liberators to protect the convoys?
9. Bill helped his friend Ken pass the gunnery exam by helping him identify the aircraft accurately. What would you have done if you were Bill in that situation? Do you think he regretted his decision?
10. Why were the Atlantic convoys so important for the Allies' victory over Nazi Germany?