

## Discussion Guide: I Am Canada *Prisoner of Dieppe*

1. Alistair didn't really think he would be enlisting when he went to the Exhibition Grounds with Mackie, but he soon found himself signed up to fight in a war. Why do you think Mackie (like many other young men) was so eager to go overseas to fight? How did Allie feel once he realized what he'd done?

Discussion could include Mackie being driven by his thirst for adventure, or wanting to get away from home and see more of the world, and might shift to many of Canada's young men having such a sense of loyalty to Britain that they felt compelled to come to her aid against Germany. Most readers will be able to relate to being swayed or persuaded into doing something because a friend was urging them on, or they look up to that person.

2. How did their training prepare the soldiers for the raid on Dieppe? Allie and others risked their own safety to follow orders, take offensive action, and help men who were wounded. What makes some people do "the right thing" even when their actions could result in injury or even death?

Discussion might involve courage, acting without thinking of the consequences to oneself, being inspired by another's bravery, following orders without question because of prior training, and the consequence of disobeying orders being very serious.

3. Padre John Foote has a chance to be rescued along with some of the soldiers, but he jumps off the boat and says his place is with his men. Discuss what might have led to his decision. Can you think of other people who have made a very difficult decision that is courageous in this or another way?

Foote's personal courage, his sense of duty, and his faith might all come into the discussion. Discussion re other courageous people can range widely, from physical courage (soldiers, firemen, police officers) to moral courage (people such as Nelson Mandela choosing to stay in prison rather than compromise his stand on apartheid). Some examples will be more here-and-now, such as a girl choosing to wear or not wear a hijab to school, stepping in to stop a bully, etc.

4. One soldier in the railway car figures out a plan of escape, and POWs in the camp come up with ingenious ways to tunnel below their huts. What was your favourite trick of the many that

the POWs used? Discuss how people with various skills used these in the escape efforts. What kinds of skills could readers use in a similar situation?

5. How did Allie's attempt to keep Mackie from escaping backfire tragically? What else might he have done to keep Mackie from trying to get away? Why do you think the author chose to explain what really happened only at the very end of the story?

Discussion might include various ploys Allie could have used to keep Mackie from making a second attempt. Readers will have thoughts on writers' choices about when to reveal key information, when to keep it hidden to create more tension or suspense, and so on.

6. If you were in a prison camp in a foreign land and got a Red Cross box or a box from home, what ten things would you most want to be in it? Why are these important to you?

7. Which of the photographs or documents in the illustration section stands out for you? Why?

8. The map, with the various assaults on the beaches, makes it look as if the Allies would overpower the German defences. What are some of the things that went wrong and led to the raid being a disaster?

Readers might mention staging the raid in the same place as before, the German defenders being alerted to the oncoming landing craft, the bombardment not cutting enough of the barbed wire, the entrenched positions of the German machine-gun nests, the tanks being ineffectual on the cobbled beach and not being able to penetrate the seawall.