The Chosen -- Study Guide Questions

Please answer these questions on a separate piece of paper. Fill in the missing definitions in the glossary. We suggest online dictionaries from Longman or Oxford. This study guide will be collected on the first day of school and entered into the gradebook. Answer the questions on your own. Do not collaborate with another student or use an outside resource. If you are not sure how to answer a question, give it your best guess.

anti-Semitism: Irrational hostility toward Jews, often characterized by discrimination, persecution, and violence. (comes from Semite, another word for a Jewish person)

apikoros/apikorsim:

blatt a unit of study or a chapter in Hebrew religious studies

cabbala

earlocks thin locks of hair just in front of the ears that remain uncut (like grown out sideburns) particular to Hasidic Jews

genocide: The systematic killing of a racial, ethnic, or religious group, or destruction of their culture. One of the first modern examples comes from the Turkish genocide of the Armenians people in the early 1900s. Hitler is said to have used this example as justification for his own planned genocide (Final Solutions) of the Jewish people. Other modern examples include Rwanda/Hutus, Iraq/Kurds, Serbs/Bosnians.

Hasidism (Hasidic Jews):

holocaust: (literal, dictionary definition) Literally, the word means "destruction by fire."

[the] Holocaust: (historical term) The murder of approximately 6 million Jews and other minorities by Nazi Germany and its allies between 1933 and 1945.

Orthodox Judaism a strict form of Judaism (not quite as strict as Hasidism)

phylacteries small leather boxes containing scripture quotations, strapped to the forehead or arm of a Jewish man during morning weekday prayers as a symbolic gesture of holiness tefillin another term for phylacteries

rabi: a religious leader of a Jewish community or synagogue; similar to a priest, minister, pastor or reverend in the Christian religion

samovar a metal urn with a spigot, used to boil water for tea (Russian)

Shabbat:

synagogue: a place of worship for a Jewish community; a temple (similar to a church in the Christian religion, or a mosque in the Islamic religion, or a wat in the Buddhist religion)

Talmud: a collection of 63 religious books meant to be studied, interpreted and debated

tzaddik a Hasidic leader, greatly revered and respected, considered extremely wise

tzitzit a religious garment, similar to a shawl, worn by devout Jews (usually under a shirt)

yeshiva:

Yiddish

Yom Kippur:

Zionism:

Zohar one of the Jewish books of mysticism
The Chosen Chapter 1
1. Why did Jews feel a need to prove athleticism to gentiles? Why is baseball important to the Jewish boys?
2. Why is Mr. Galanter’s coaching style so militaristic?
3. What prejudices does each team seem to have about the other?
4. What seems to motivate the Hasidic team?
5. Describe the first real exchange between Danny and Reuven.
6. Why does the game become a war for Reuven?
7. Describe Danny Saunders appearance when he hit the ball at Reuven. What was the purpose for the crazy smile?

The Chosen Chapter 2
1. Describe Mr. Savo.
2. What approach does he have toward life?
3. Why do you think Billy affects him?

The Chosen Chapter 3
1. What does Savo think about Reuven’s decision to be a rabbi?
2. How does Reuven feel about Danny coming to visit him?
3. Do you think Danny came on his own, or was forced?
4. How does Reuven feel after Danny leaves?
5. How is Danny able to play baseball?
6. How does Danny seem to feel about becoming a rabbi?
7. Why do you think Reuven chooses to forgive Danny?
8. How does Reb Saunders feel about talking and writing? How might this affect his son?

The Chosen Chapter 4
1. Why do you think Mr. Malter wants Danny and Reuven to be friends?
2. Why does Mr. Savo warn Reuven against Danny? Make a prediction: is he right?
3. Why is Danny’s father so strict about what he reads? Why does Danny read books in the library?
4. Why is Danny becoming a rabbi and how does he feel about it?
5. What is intriguing or ironic about each boy’s career choice?
6. Why didn’t Mr. Malter tell Reuven he knew Danny?
7. Why does Danny not seem Hasidic to Reuven?
8. What was the significance of the two minor characters of Billy and Mr. Savo?

The Chosen Chapter 5
1. What is the significance of the snowball bush?
2. What seems to have changed for Reuven?
3. What does he ponder?

The Chosen Chapter 6
1. Why does Mr. Malter tell Reuven about Jewish history in Poland?
2. Why do you think the father went into such detail?
3. What was the author’s purpose of including this history?
4. Why is Danny torn and lonely?

The Chosen Chapter 7
1. Why does Danny seem down about his father?
2. What are some of the good things Reb Saunders has done?
3. Why do you think Danny wants Reuven to be honest with him?
4. What kind of powers does Reb seem to need over his congregation?
5. Describe Danny’s brother.
6. Reb Saunders insists that only the Jews are commanded to study what?
7. What is gematriya?
8. How does Reuven begin to enjoy himself more and more and become more at ease while with Danny’s congregation?
9. What do the Hasids probably think of Reuven?
10. What is Reuven’s opinion about the value of the gematriya and the quizzes?
11. How does Reb feel about Danny choosing Reuven as a friend?
12. Danny and Reuven are happy to find out they have what in common?

**The Chosen Chapter 8**
1. How do the boys in Reuven’s class treat him on his 1st day back to school?
2. What does Reuven observe about the way Danny reads?
3. What does Danny read that upsets him?
4. Why might dreams and the subconscious be important to Danny and Reuven?
5. Why is Reuven shocked that Danny’s learning German?
6. What confuses Reuven about Danny and his brother?
7. Why is David Malter uncomfortable with guiding Danny’s reading?
8. Describe the debate over Talmud between Danny and his father. What emotional and mental impact does it have?
9. How does Reuven fare when he joins in? Why do you think he enjoyed himself?
10. Why would Reb choose to treat his son with silence? Can any good come of it?

**The Chosen Chapter 9**
1. How does the outcome of Billy’s surgery affect Reuven?
2. What could the spider and fly represent?

**The Chosen Chapter 10**
1. Are the reactions between Reuven’s friends about his friendship with Danny realistic?
2. Why is the study of Freud so frustrating for Danny?
3. What system does he devise for tackling Freud?

**The Chosen Chapter 11**
1. What concern is there about Danny’s eyes?
2. Why do Danny and Reuven not see each other as much?
3. Why does Roosevelt’s death affect Danny so deeply?
4. What question do both Reb and Elie Wiesel ask of God about the Holocaust?
5. What is David Malter’s response to Reb’s comment that Jews must accept the will of God?
6. What does he think the Jewish people should do?

**The Chosen Chapter 12**
1. How do Danny and Reuven spend their time during the month of July?
2. What does Reuven observe about Reb’s behavior?
3. What is it about Freud that Danny finds upsetting?
4. How does David Malter feel about rebuilding Jewish culture and waiting for the Messiah?
5. How does Reb Saunders feel about creating a Jewish home in Israel?
6. What is Danny’s explanation for Reb’s constant crying?
7. What does Danny admit about his relationship with his brother?
8. What does Danny think of the “silent treatment”?

**The Chosen Chapter 13**
1. Why is Danny miserable in college?
2. To what can Danny’s faith in Freud be compared? (Reuven jokes about this)
3. What could the other reasons be for Danny’s frustrations?
4. Why does Reuven continue to be worried about his father?
5. What does David Malter say about filling one’s life with meaning?
6. Considering Danny’s relationship with his father, why might he have trouble talking to Appleman?
7. What sort of communication problem does Danny face with his own father?
8. Why does Zionism begin to split college?
9. What is David Malter’s explanation for Reb’s decision to end the boy’s friendship over Zionism?
10. What does he say about Reb Saunders’ fanaticism?

The Chosen Chapter 14
1. How does Reuven feel about Reb’s ban on friendship? How does Reuven describe silence?
2. How does Reb organize the young Hasids?
3. Why do the anti-Zionists cease their campaigning?
4. What makes Danny attempt to communicate (show sympathy) to Reuven and how does he do it?
5. What is unusual about Reuven’s response to the Talmud argument? What does it likely symbolize?

The Chosen Chapter 15
1. How do Reuven and Danny begin to communicate?
2. What finally made the anti-Zionist league die within the school?
3. How / When / Why does Danny reenter Reuven’s life?

The Chosen Chapter 16
1. How does Reuven first treat Danny when they start talking again?
2. What does David Malter mean when he says the silence is the price to pay for a soul?
3. Why does Danny continue to defend his father’s use of silence?
4. When will Danny tell his father of his intentions?

The Chosen Chapter 17
1. What does Danny mean he can listen to silence?
2. What connection does the pain of the world have?
3. What are some of the troubling questions David brings up about Danny’s intentions and why does he do so?
4. What does David Malter know about the silence?
5. Why is David Malter angry with Reuven for shunning Reb?

The Chosen Chapter 18
1. Why does Reb continue to talk through Reuven?
2. How long has he known? How did he find out?
3. Why does Reb feel it’s both a curse and a blessing to have a son like Danny?
4. What happened in Reb’s family that he feared would happen in his own?
5. Why did Reb’s father treat him with silence and why does he continue the tradition?
6. Why must a tzaddik know pain?
7. Ultimately, why did he raise his son in silence? Does he consider his efforts a success?
8. How does Reb feel about Reuven and David Malter?
9. Why does Reb accept the fact that Danny will become a psychiatrist?
10. When Danny and Reuven take a walk after the confrontation with Reb, why are they silent and what does Reuven comment?