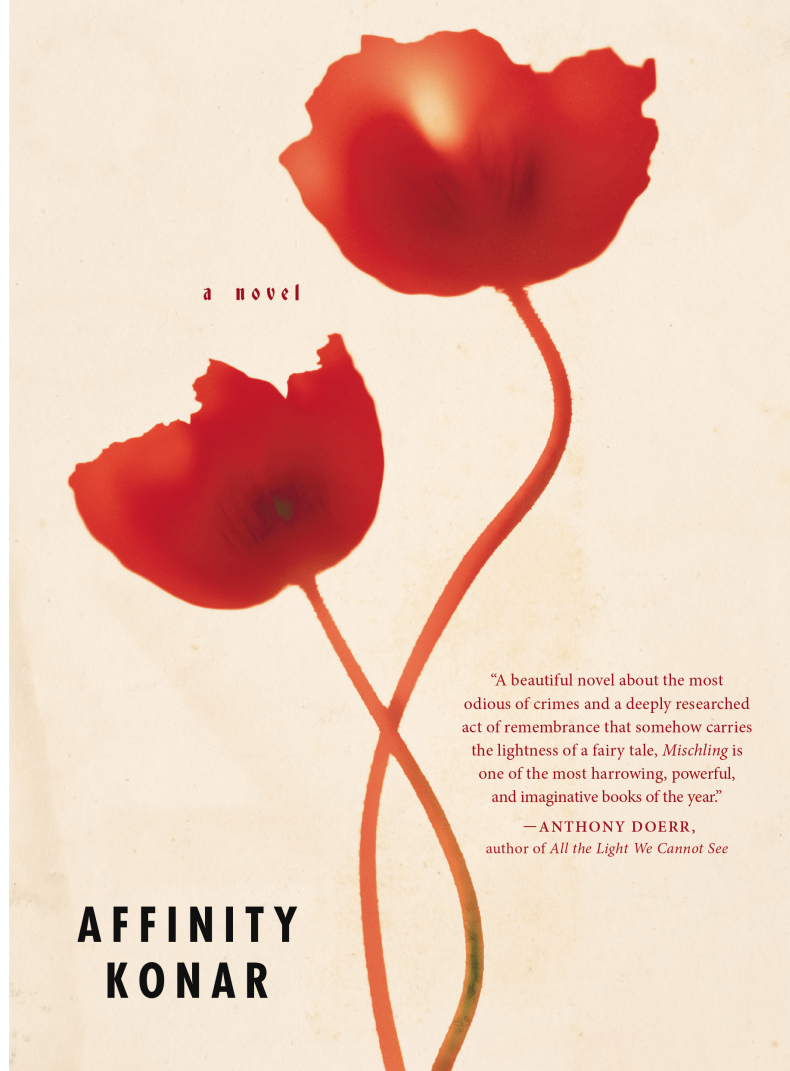


# MISCHLING



## Discussion Questions for Affinity Konar's MISCHLING

1. Did you have any prior knowledge of the medical experiments conducted at Auschwitz? What struck you most about the plight of those selected by Josef Mengele?
2. Music played a significant role in the workings of Auschwitz-Birkenau. Prisoners were greeted by music at the ramps, and Stasha notes that suicide was frequent among the musicians that provided this accompaniment. The idea of music itself, with its ability to distract from suffering, or to transport one to a life before imprisonment, could often be bittersweet. What place would you imagine music might have in the memories of a survivor?

3. In many of Mengele's studies, one twin was subjected to experimentation, while the other remained untouched. As the spared twin, Stasha is forced to witness Pearl's decline. How does this change her sensitivity towards her sister? What about her relationship with those around her?
4. The brutality of Auschwitz-Birkenau forced many prisoners to become resourceful in unimaginable ways. Discuss the hierarchy of Mengele's zoo, and the roles of Bruna, Ox, and Twins' Father within it.
5. We often think of acts of resistance as grand displays of heroism, but such acts can also be witnessed in small, meaningful exchanges amongst the prisoners. Peter's theft of the piano key could be classified as an act of resistance. Can you name other instances of rebellion, large or small? Would you classify survival itself as a form of resistance?
6. The Nazi regime used the term *mischling* to describe Jews of mixed heritage. Why does Stasha refer to this word while receiving the injection that will make her "deathless"? What do you think this word means to her by the novel's end?
7. Pearl tells us that she survives Mengele's tortures by listening to Zayde and Mama, and by playing *The Classification of Living Things*. How do these diversions inform her survival? Can you imagine other ways that one might endure such conditions?
8. In Part II, Pearl focuses on forgiveness, while Stasha cares only for vengeance. Describe how the girls' perspectives inform their endurance and resolve.
9. What event convinces Twins' Father that he can no longer take care of the twins? Do you agree with the decision that he and Miri make?
10. Pearl gives us glimpses of the future. What do we learn about the fates of characters in the book?
11. Discuss the notion of "the survivor's hour" as described by Jakub. How does this apply to Miri's grief, and her role as a doctor within the camp? Years later, Miri resumes her practice. Do you think she is at peace with her life-saving actions?
12. Stasha survives the loss of her family. Pearl survives torture, isolation, and the physical damage of Mengele's cruelty. Is it at all fair to compare the two scenarios, and wonder which twin has endured the greater challenges?
13. At their reunion, the Zamorski twins draw images that refer to their quest for survival, but they omit any image that might represent Mengele. Do you see this omission as a meaningful indication of how the twins will resume their lives? What do you think the future holds for Stasha and Pearl?
14. MISCHLING asks how a survivor might "learn to love the world again". When one has suffered the loss of family, home, and health, how can such a thing be possible? Can you imagine what you might turn to in order to restore your vision of the world?