

## Reading Group Guide for *The Commandant of Lubizec* by Patrick Hicks

1. Although Lubizec didn't exist, were there times when you thought that it did? When did this happen?
2. What were your feelings about Hans-Peter Guth? How could he murder thousands of people a day and then go home to love his children? Is this believable?
3. Throughout the narrative, Hicks often blends fact and fiction. Why did he use footnotes that refer to real historical documents? What effect did this have?
4. What did you think of the relationship between Guth and his wife, Jasmine? How did living so close to a factory of death influence their marriage?
5. Hicks often interrupts the action to offer comments from Zischer and Damiel—these comments are all taken from fictitious interviews recorded years after Lubizec was destroyed. What interruptions were the most powerful for you? What did you think of the chapter called “Evidence”?
6. When Erich Bolender, an SS Judge, shows up at Lubizec to investigate criminal activity in the warehouses of Zurich, were you surprised by his reaction? Is it likely that a high-ranking Nazi officer would be startled by the reality of a death camp when he sees one for the first time?
7. After the escape, why was the camp plowed into the ground? Why were the real life “Operation Reinhard” camps destroyed in 1943?
8. How did having Guth as a father influence Sigi and Karl as adults? Which one of them has come to terms with their father the best? What would it mean to have a father like Guth? How would you react?
9. Did Guth ever acknowledge the scope of his crime? If yes, when did this happen? If no, what does this mean and why doesn't he admit his guilt?
10. Hardly any of the guards at Lubizec were put on trial after the war. In fact, Guth lives a comfortable life in Barcelona for many years. Why was justice so lax?
11. Chaim Zischer and Dov Damiel are haunted by what they saw at Lubizec. How do they cope with their memories? Who suffered more after the war: The victims or the perpetrators?
12. History itself is a story. What is Hicks saying about memory and documentation and how we remember the past? What will happen to our understanding of the Holocaust when our last living eyewitness passes away?

13. The final scene in the novel takes place at Lubizec and we see what the camp looks like today. The novel closes with Zischer standing before the gas chamber site. How do we commemorate genocide? What have we learned from the Holocaust? What are you likely to take away from this book?