

STUDY GUIDE

by Sue Bruns

- 1. What details of place and background information help to establish the setting of the book as a typical small town farming community? What details help to establish the time period of the story?**
- 2. In what ways does the Church (as the building itself, the congregation, and the beliefs of the Catholic church) provide an undertone, a unifying theme, and/or the basis of morality and social structure in the book? Which characters seem to be the most strictly controlled by the rules of the church?**
- 3. What parallels do you see between Father Jim's "situation" and the "choice" he made reflected in Father Ruzicka's interactions with Miriam, his housekeeper? What are the chances that Father Ruzicka might stray from his commitments as Father Jim did?**
- 4. Examine the attributes of the female characters as compared to the males. What similarities and differences do you see?**
- 5. Lewandowski describes the book as a series of interrelated stories on a common theme. How does this structure work to pull together the details of the community? What does the reader learn as different incidents (Father Ruzicka and Miriam's interaction; the scene in Muller's Tavern) are revisited with emphases on different characters?**
- 6. What theme or themes run through the stories?**
- 7. How did you feel about Rudy's death? What unanswered questions are left after the final story of the book? What is the significance of the envelope of money and the note, signed "Walter"? (Walter was a minor character in another story. How is he connected to other characters from earlier stories?) How did you feel about the unanswered questions you had after the last story?**
- 8. What is the reader to assume at the end about Rudy's death? Does the note signed by Walter indicate that Walter is involved in Rudy's death?**
- 9. List some of the prominent metaphors in the book.**