

Researching Schlink's *The Reader*—Chapters 1-12

Essential Question: What does Schlink borrow in this historical fiction novel? #history #allusions

- Develop a more comprehensive understanding of the vital historical context in part I and seek to understand the significance of the allusions in part II **using several sources, because “nothing is simply one thing” (Woolf)**.
- Informally cite your sources (“According to JSTOR, the Weimar Republic’s failure held the antecedents of...”) to increase your ethos.
- **Select a topic from Group I or Group II. Research and create a detailed poster about what you learn. Bring a paper copy to class to turn in Monday.**

Group I Topics: Research to develop **historical context** for this historical fiction (a story is made up but is set in the past and sometimes borrows true characteristics of the time period in which it is set) novel.

1. Describe the government of Germany in 1956. To what extent had the German government acknowledged or made reparations for the Nazi genocide in 1956?
2. How had that government changed—in terms of leadership, political bent, and attitude towards WWII—six years later? 18 years later?
3. What are some extant German laws that have been made to protect the positive legacy of German culture while strongly condemning the Nazi years?
4. To what extent did WWII damage Germany’s buildings and infrastructure? To what extent had Germany been rebuilt in 1956?
5. What was German high school like in 1956 for fifteen-year-old boys? Girls?

Group II Topics: Research **allusions** in this historical fiction. First, research to find out what text Schlink refers to in the allusion. Next, analyze the thematic significance of the texts Schlink picks for Michael to read.

1. “While I was sick, the class had read **Emilia Galotti** and **Intrigues and Love**, and there was an essay due on them. So I had to read both, which I did after finishing everything else. By then it was late, and I was tired, and next day I'd forgot- ten it all and had to start all over again.” (Schlink ch 10)
2. “I identified more with **Julien Sorel's relationship with Madame de Renal than his one with Mathilde de la Mole.**” (Schlink ch 9)
3. “I was glad to see **Felix Krull** end up in the arms of the mother rather than the daughter.” (Schlink ch 9)
4. “My sister, who was studying German literature, delivered a report at the dinner table about the controversy as to whether **Mr. von Goethe and Madame von Stein** had had a relationship, and I vigorously defended the idea, to the bafflement of my family.” (Schlink ch 10).
5. “I knew there was a book on **Kant** and another on **Hegel** that my father had written, and I searched for them and showed them to her.” (Schlink ch 12)