

The Road Home

by Rose Tremain



About the Book

In the wake of factory closings and his beloved wife's death, Lev makes his way from Eastern Europe to London, seeking work to support his mother and his little daughter. After a spell of homelessness, he finds a job in the kitchen of a posh restaurant and a room in the house of an appealing Irishman who has already lost his family. Never mind that Lev must sleep in a bunk bed surrounded by plastic toys--he has found a friend and shelter. However constricted his life in England remains, he compensates by daydreaming of home, by having an affair with a younger restaurant worker, and by trading gossip and ambitions via cell phone with his hilarious friend Rudi, who, dreaming of the wealthy West, lives largely for his battered Chevrolet.

Homesickness dogs Lev, not only for nostalgic reasons, but because he doesn't belong, body or soul, to his new country --- but can he really go home again? Rose Tremain's prodigious talents as a prose writer are on full display in **The Road Home**, and her novel never loses sight of what is truly important in the lives we lead.

Discussion Guide

1. In the opening pages of **The Road Home** Lev is described as having "a vibrant imagination" and as having often been called "a dreamer." How do these traits help him to endure the loneliness and hardship that follow? Discuss whether or not you think these qualities would enhance any person's life.
2. Rose Tremain has said that she was advised against making **The Road Home** "too glum." How does she use humor to lighten Lev's trials? Which scenes did you find particularly funny?
3. Lev's attitude toward life is serious, sometimes melancholic. How do his beliefs and nature set him apart from most of the Britons he encounters in London? How does Lev's response to abstract art (page 143) differ from or match your own? Would you be comfortable watching a play about incest? Do you think your own native culture influences your

responses?

4. Lev's friend Rudi is a more lighthearted Eastern European who longs for the amenities of the West. In what ways do Lev and Lydia, too, seek pleasure? Considering Lev's abiding love for his late wife, is his relationship with Sophie surprising to you? How is he conflicted about the liberties the urban West has to offer?

5. Both Lev and his new friend Christy have lost loved ones. How does Rose Tremain emphasize their shared emotional state in chapter 12 when they take a visit to the seaside with Christy's young daughter? What else do Lev and Christy have in common that indicates that their friendship is a solid one?

6. Rose Tremain has said, "I get letters from people saying they look at the builders next door in a different way now. Because they don't just see a group, they see Lev. And that's exactly what I hoped might happen." How has your image of immigrant workers changed after reading **The Road Home**? Are you more aware of social and financial obstacles immigrants may face than you were previously?

7. Of the many vivid minor characters in *The Road Home*, which are the most memorable to you? Why?

8. The labor in a restaurant kitchen is realistically depicted by Rose Tremain, as is the hard work of those immigrants who grow and harvest the food served. Were you surprised by the various demands of both endeavors? How does Lev use his low-end jobs to inspire and achieve his dream of returning home?

9. Discuss the ways in which the transformations in Lev, after his experiences in England, make his homecoming both challenging and productive.

10. Lev's first visitors on his return to his homeland are the Irishman Christy, and his Indian bride, Jasmina. What other nationalities are represented in **The Road Home**? Do you think the novel effectively personalizes our interdependent, multicultural world?

Author Bio

Rose Tremain's prize-winning books, including *THE ROAD HOME*, *THE GUSTAV SONATA*, *MERIVEL* and *THE AMERICAN LOVER*, have been published in 30 countries. Chancellor of the University of East Anglia, Commander of the Order of the British Empire, and member of the Royal Society of Literature, she lives in Norfolk, England with the biographer Richard Holmes.

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