Discussion Questions

• When the German army arrives in Riga they are welcomed by the Latvians and Hanna is hopeful that “they will make things better”. Why do you think this is?

• Mama and Omama are aware of the potential dangers they face when Latvia is occupied by the Nazis. Discuss their decision to stay.

• In Chapter Six, Hanna says, “I don’t want to be Jewish. I am going to be Latvian and not Jewish from now on. I will not wear the star.” Consider your response to Hanna’s outburst, and the effects of wearing the star.

• Imagine you are being forced to leave your home and can only pack what you can carry. What would you take, and why?
“Prayer is free,” says Omama. “We can have as much of that as we want. The Nazis can’t take that away from us.” Throughout the book, the Michelsons continue to practise the Jewish faith and observe Jewish rituals. Why do you think they do this?

Do you believe Uldis ever cared for Hanna? Why do you think he betrays the Michelsons to the Nazis?

Does everybody obey the Nazis all the time? What acts of resistance, small and large, can you find in the book?

“We are like animals trapped in the zoo.” In Chapter Fourteen we learn there are 30,000 people crammed into sixteen blocks in the ghetto. What impact do you think living in these conditions had on people, and on how those outside the ghetto perceived them?

What are your thoughts on the book’s title?

Throughout the book, Hanna remains focused on surviving in order to tell her story. Why is this so important?
Usborne Quicklinks

For links to websites where you can take a virtual tour of the Rīga Ghetto, find information about the Holocaust, Nazi Germany and the Second World War, and discover more about Judaism, go to the Usborne Quicklinks website at www.usborne.com/quicklinks and enter the keywords “The Earth is Singing”.

Please make sure you follow the internet safety guidelines displayed at the Usborne Quicklinks website. The recommended websites at Usborne Quicklinks are regularly reviewed and updated, but Usborne Publishing Ltd is not responsible for the content or availability of any website other than its own.

www.usborne.com/fiction