



STUTTGART BOOK CLUB READING GUIDE

Author Biography



Ursula Hegi Ursula Hegi grew up in a small German town. She left her country of origin when she was eighteen years old, moved to America, and became a United States citizen five years later. Hegi has discovered that it is impossible to leave behind one's origins. "The older I get," she says, "the more I realize that I am inescapably encumbered with the heritage of my country's history."

Hegi's interest in writing began when she was six years old. At the age of fourteen or fifteen, she wrote in German half a novel on lined note paper. It was not until after she arrived in the States that she wrote and tried to publish her first novel. Discouraged by all the rejection letters, she abandoned writing for three years. When she was twenty-eight, with two sons ages five and one, Hegi enrolled at the University of New Hampshire for a BA and then an MA. This was when her serious commitment to writing began. It was then that she made the decision to keep writing, even if no one ever read her work again. It changed the way she wrote: instead of writing to be published, she wrote for herself. With the self-imposed pressure removed, her work began to flow. Her first novel, *Intrusions*, was published in 1981. Germany beckoned Hegi to return in 1986 when she was researching *Floating in My Mother's Palm*, the highly acclaimed novel about life in a small German village called Burgdorf. While visiting her hometown, she searched for the Zwerg woman she remembered from her childhood, a woman who had been feared by the people of the town because she gossiped about everyone's secrets. Hegi was unable to locate her. The Zwerg woman, hearing that Hegi was looking for her, found Hegi in a cafe. Instead of answering the questions Hegi asked, she said, "I hear you've been divorced." Only after Hegi disclosed some details of her personal life was the woman willing to respond to Hegi's questions. This way of bartering for information contributed to Hegi's character development of Trudi Montag.