UNDER A FIRE-RED SKY

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Discussion Questions

- 1. At the start of the novel, the four friends leave the train that would have taken them to a safer place. Why do they each make this decision, and what does it reveal about their personalities and motivations?
- 2. Olive maintains a strong connection with "Johnny" (the fallen pilot) long after his death. What do you think he symbolizes for Olive, and how does this connection shape her actions throughout the story?
- 3. Why is Lawrence so committed to his Project? Do you think being labelled "intense" in his school report helped or hindered this dedication?
- 4. "Franklin was too young to be a firefighter." To what extent do you agree with this statement? Consider both his personal qualities and the historical context in your response.
- 5. Susan "The Gremlin" Rowe initially rejects her birth name. What does this tell us about her identity and how she sees herself? Considering this, why is her decision to share her real name with the Doctor on p. 135 so significant?
- 6. After Olive tells the Doctor about the German parachutist hiding in the shed, the Doctor walks around the entire perimeter of the compound before returning to the conversation (p. 208). Why do you think he does this? What do you imagine he's thinking about at this moment?
- 7. The four friends regularly visit the Painted Hall at the Old Royal Naval College. What does the painted ceiling here represent to our protagonists?
- 8. Identify three major themes in this novel. How does the author develop these themes? What impact do they have on the characters' journeys?