

## *Lord of the Nutcracker Men*

### Discussion Questions

1. What is the relevance of Johnny's father being a toy maker? How are youth and adulthood represented in the novel? How is Johnny's father described before the war? What is his attitude toward the war at that time? How does Johnny's father's attitude toward the war change once he has reached the front? How do the descriptions of him change at that time?
2. What role does nationality play throughout the book? How does Johnny's father feel about neighbors and friends such as Fatty Dienst when they leave England to fight in the war? Does his opinion of them change when he is fighting on the front lines?
3. How does Johnny's understanding of war change from the beginning of the novel to the end? How are his feelings and his interpretation of war reflected in his battles with the toy soldiers? How are they reflected in his image of his father? How does Johnny's experience with war parallel his father's?
4. What impact does the war have on women in this novel? What impact does it have on Sarah in specific? How does Sarah's knowledge and interest in the war influence Johnny's impression of her?
5. "For amusement [the gods] toy with the people. To the gods, the people are merely pieces in a great game." (p. 54) How is this idea reflected throughout the novel? How is God represented throughout the novel? Who is able to play the role of God?
6. Why is Mr. Tuttle so upset when his roses are destroyed? What do they represent to him? What did they represent to Johnny when he destroyed them? How does Johnny's attitude change by the end of the story?
7. When referring to Johnny's father, Aunt Ivy comments: "[The war] will rot him away if it doesn't end soon. He'll be changed; he'll be different. He'll be hollow." (p. 89) Does Aunt Ivy's prophecy come true? Why or why not? Who else might Aunt Ivy be describing? How does the war affect other soldiers throughout the novel?
8. What role do letters play in the novel? What part do they play in the war? Describe the different types of letters that people receive throughout the novel? How do these letters affect their lives? How do the letters from Johnny's father change from the beginning of the novel to the end?