

Good Soldier Svejk Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think Svejk's personality, background, age, marital history, family are never described?
2. Does Svejk seem mentally impaired? Literate? Is he a malingerer?
3. Svejk follows orders directly and literally, although his speech is heavily ironic. What is the outcome?
4. In the first scene how does Svejk, as Everyman, view the origin of the war? What is the author's belief about why wars begin? What unanswerable questions does he pose? Does he reveal any firm political opinions?
5. Svejk undergoes various interrogations. What do these scenes reveal about the Austrian government's pre-war social policies?
6. In his portrayal of Chaplain Katz, what view does Hasek present of the Catholic church and the Church's role in sending men to war? Why does the author give such a long description of the preparation for the Drumhead Mass?
7. Do we, in the U.S., have a contemporary satirical writer such as Hasek? How would Hasek have written about our current political climate? What would be an equivalent period in American history?
8. What other literary or cinematic works came to mind as you read Sveik?
9. The narrator's voice has been criticized, and offense taken by nearly every political and religious group. What parts of the book did you find offensive? Which seemed the most well-written?
10. Lt. Lukas was a real person; the author's company commander. How does he differ from the other officers?
11. What are your thoughts about the bureaucratic doublespeak used by the characters? How would you compare it to Orwell? To current political language?
12. Who were your favorite characters and why?