

## Discussion Guide: *Torch*

1. Why does Pavol believe that his life is over and that he's out of choices? What options might he have had that, in his despair, he didn't see?
2. What does Tomáš like about Communist philosophy? How does this philosophy contrast with his reality? How do you deal with contrasts between the values you've been taught and the way people act in real life?
3. Why was Štěpán a bully for so long? What prompted him to change?
4. How does Lída hope and try to be different from her father? In what ways does she resemble him?
5. Lída, Tomáš, and Štěpán each want to honor Pavol's memory. What are some examples of how they try to do this?
6. What are Tomáš's, Lída's, and Štěpán's main hobbies and interests? What do these interests tell you about them?
7. Lída tells Štěpán, "We're your family now." How do the characters support each other in ways their families of origin don't or can't?
8. Pavol wanted to stay in Czechoslovakia and work for change within the country. The others choose different paths. How do their choices change over the course of the novel, and why? What do you think you would do?
9. Pavol suffered from depression and alcohol abuse. If he lived in your community today, how could his friends or family help him?
10. Lída, Tomáš, and Štěpán all consider themselves outcasts for different reasons. Who are the outcasts in your school or community, and how do you treat them?