**Discussion Topics and Thoughts for Carsten Jensen *We, The Drowned***

Dear fellow book-lovers,

I sincerely hope you have enjoyed this masterpiece although its length may have appeared daunting in the beginning.  It covers a myriad of themes and thoughts, so this time I have chosen not to make a summary including detailed questions. Instead, I would like to focus on what I perceive as his most important themes and messages in the book.

- It is quite a philosophical work, and he consistently uses foreshadowing to sharpen our appetite and move us through the action. Is this an acceptable writing technique, or does it bother you to know that the omniscient author is “teasing” you with his omniscience?

- Who is the narrator – and the repeated “we”? Is the author (CJ from now on) creating a book in which we can all take part by joining the “we,” is he inviting us to view the population of Marstal as a “we,” or???

- Why does CJ start with death? And why is death so ubiquitous in the book? Why does he choose a circle of death, starting with the war of 1848 and ending with World War 2 (1939-45)?

- What is the point of the comparison of what war does to ordinary people and what life does to ordinary people – maybe, in this case, actually people who are sailors?

- Why is CJ sharing so many details of the interpretation of education in Marstal by teacher Isager? Is Isager evil incarnate? – or is he preparing the boys for “real” life?

- Where are the women in these first parts of the book? What is their role, what do they do, how do they survive?

- Albert is the only one who uses the law to gain justice.  Why is that the case?

- Albert seems to represent many themes: justice, fairness, beat or be beaten, pragmatism, death by drowning, freedom, longing for the unknown, a leader of men, faith and superstition and more. He raises the question: why does one travel abroad? – what is the answer?

- Albert is also used to introduce the theme of class difference and class struggle. How are the classes defined in Marstal?

Slowly, “technology” is being introduced as a new theme in the life of Marstal. What does Herman Frandsen represent? And how is he different from Albert’s quest for balance?

- The First World War questions the meaning of everything. Albert’s visions convey the reality of death in all its shapes, and he is lost without neither anchor nor faith. He is saved by the boy Knud Erik. Why is he so reluctant to marry the boy’s mother Klara Friis? And why does he, nonetheless, make her his sole heir?

- What is the symbolic meaning of Captain Cook’s head?

- With Albert’s death, the women gain a new role. How do they slowly begin to turn the town in another direction, how does the Spanish Flu help them, and why does Isaksen fail?

- Are adults always the enemy of children?

- Is there any room for infatuation and love in a sailor’s life?  Many of the sailors have wives and children. What kind of relationship do they have?

- How are the women’s destinies linked to each other, especially Kristina’s and Klara’s? What do their lives represent?

- Should we believe in fate and destiny, or is our life simply the result of our own actions?

- Is Klara an evil person, or is she an idealist in her attempt to make the women independent by killing the seafaring industry in Marstal? And is it ever possible to conquer the sea?

- Second World War also inaugurates the end of the old sail ships, and Knud Erik is the captain of a steel ship. What is the lesson he learns from the war, and what does it do to him as a human being?

- Does the war make everyone equal? Can crimes be forgotten (Herman Frandsen) in the fight for survival, or will there always be a chasm between the good and the bad guys?

- Albert sought balance and erected a stone monument; now this task has shifted to miss Sofie. What are her means of bringing balance to her surroundings?

- What is the symbolic meaning of the stork towards the end?

- Think about the ending of the book. Why are they dancing, and what does it mean for their future?