**DISCUSSION POINTS FOR TOPIC 4 OF *UNPLANNED***

1. Henry Savage’s wife first wife died of **cancer** during the early 1940s when the only treatments available were surgery and radiation. They sold their farm close to the river because of the dampness, mist and fog it created and moved a few miles away to higher, drier land. It would not be until 30 years later that alternative cancer therapies began to emerge.
2. Henry Savage contracted **diabetes** but was able to stabilize his illness using insulin during the 1940s and 1950s (first introduced in the UK in 1923). Dietary care was imposed with the requirement to eat plenty of fish, eggs and green leafy vegetables, but to avoid carbohydrates. Insulin was injected daily in the morning into his thigh using a glass and metal syringe. Blood glucose monitoring was difficult to apply because of the unpredictable tasks on a farm, and boiling urine for testing was unpleasant and messy. Contrast these difficulties with the conveniences of treatment today.
3. John suffered the usual range of childhood diseases that were considered inevitable at the time. As a one-year-old he contracted the bacterial infection of **whooping cough**, a highly contagious disease that can be fatal for babies. The illness creates uncontrollable, violent coughing which often makes it hard to breathe. Treatment was available using antibiotics and since the late 1940s, vaccination has been available.
4. There were other childhood diseases that John contracted once he began school. **Measles** was the first disease he brought home, which was then passed through the rest of his family. Isolation and home care were the primary remedies until the measles virus was isolated in 1954 and a vaccine developed. You may wish to discuss your recollections of these diseases?
5. Other illnesses included **chicken pox** (an itchy rash of blisters plus fever), **German measles** (mild illness with a rash maybe lasting three days) and **mumps** (that causes puffy cheeks and a swollen jaw). Today, all of these can be treated with vaccines. You may wish to reflect on the illnesses you experienced as a child, how they were treated and today’s attitudes towards certain vaccinations (the concern over measles).
6. George Luckett’s life took a turn for the worst during late 1956 when he contracted the bacterial infection of **tuberculosis**. Until then he had been a successful civil engineer, provided for his family and enjoyed holidays with his children. Did he receive appropriate punishment for abandoning Frances Mary and refusing to pay court-instructed child support? As a result of his incarceration at the sanatorium his wife discovered the existence of his illegitimate child. Sympathy on the other hand might have been appropriate; **tuberculosis** was a particularly unpleasant disease and accounted for around 20,000 deaths in England and Wales annually. It was treatable with drugs, but highly infectious. Even today, the World Health Organization estimates a 2018 a worldwide annual death rate from **tuberculosis** of 1.5 million, compared to 1.1 million deaths from COVID-19, January to October 2020. There is an estimated 10 million annual **tuberculosis** cases, compared with 36.5 million cases of COVID-19 during the past nine months. What’s your experience of **tuberculosis**?
7. **Poliomyelitis**, an infectious viral disease, affecting the central nervous system, that might be extremely rare today, but that was not so during the years covered by the novel. It was a repeated cause of temporary and permanent paralysis, usually affecting the legs, and transmitted through contaminated water and food or contact with an infected person. In the book, it appears in San Francisco during 1952 and risks Emma’s life. During this same period, about 8,000 people in the UK were paralyzed due to **polio**, and 5 to 10 percent lost their lives after their breathing muscles became immobilized. Everything began to change during the mid-1950s when the Salt vaccine became available. At first it was an injection – as received by the author at primary school – but by the beginning of the 1960s, it had developed into the “sugar lump” vaccine. One of its earliest applications in the UK was in the City of Hull (the author’s university town) where an outbreak in October 1961 caused the total population of 300,000 to be vaccinated. What experiences/memories of **polio** do you have?
8. Maybe because of living on an isolated farm, Frances Mary and her family had little contact with **influenza**. There were two moderate pandemics in the UK during the period 1944 to 1974:
* **Asian Flu** 1957-58; 33,000 estimated UK deaths/1.1 million worldwide, and 116,000 in the US.
* **Hong Kong Flu** 1968-69; 80,000 estimated UK deaths/1.0 million worldwide, and 100,000 in the US.

Notes: UK COVID-19 deaths as of Jan. to early October 2020: 43,000

US COVID-19 deaths as of Jan. to early October 2020: 212,000

1. Last but not least are the **mental health** symptoms experienced by George Luckett as his business and marriage began to fail. He was given anti-depressants to treat his aggressive behavior and loss of temper, although his children understood it was treatment for his migraine following his manic periods. He eventually was sectioned into a mental hospital to receive electroconvulsive therapy against his will that was given to patients who did not respond to anti-depressants. How would you have reacted if your spouse had insisted that you be forcibly detained for psychiatric treatment?