

## Facilitator Package: Generic Discussion Questions

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### Generic Discussion Questions:

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1. What surprised you about the book?
2. What new fact or facts did you learn from reading this book?
3. What life lessons can be learned from the events in this book?
4. Did you admire or detest the author?
5. Did you like the author's writing style?
6. Did you think there was too much detail or not enough?
7. How did you relate to the stories in the book?
8. What do you think was the author's point in writing this book?
9. Did this book change your life or outlook in a positive or negative way?
10. Would you read other books by this author? Why or why not?
11. Did this book remind you of any other books you have read?
12. What did you like best about this book?
13. What did you like least about this book?
14. What other books did this remind you of?
15. Which characters in the book did you like best?
16. Which characters did you like least?
17. If you were making a movie of this book, who would you cast?
18. Share a favorite quote from the book. Why did this quote stand out?
19. What other books by this author have you read? How did they compare to this book?
20. Would you read another book by this author? Why or why not?
21. What feelings did this book evoke for you?
22. What did you think of the book's length? If it's too long, what would you cut? If too short, what would you add?
23. What songs does this book make you think of? Create a book group playlist together!
24. If you got the chance to ask the author of this book one question, what would it be?
25. Which character in the book would you most like to meet?
26. Which places in the book would you most like to visit?
27. What do you think of the book's title? How does it relate to the book's contents? What other title might you choose?
28. What do you think of the book's cover? How well does it convey what the book is about? If the book has been published with different covers, which one do you like best?

29. What do you think the author's purpose was in writing this book? What ideas was he or she trying to get across?
30. How original and unique was this book?
31. If you could hear this same story from another person's point of view, who would you choose?
32. What artist would you choose to illustrate this book? What kinds of illustrations would you include?
33. Did this book seem realistic?
34. How well do you think the author built the world in the book?
35. Did the characters seem believable to you? Did they remind you of anyone?
36. Did the book's pace seem too fast/too slow/just right?
37. If you were to write fanfic about this book, what kind of story would you want to tell?

## Non-fiction Questions:

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1. What did you already know about this book's subject before you read this book?
2. What new things did you learn?
3. What questions do you still have?
4. What else have you read on this topic, and would you recommend these books to others?
5. What do you think about the author's research? Was it easy to see where the author got his or her information? Were the sources credible?
6. What was the purpose of this book (eg, to teach, to entertain)?
7. If this book was intended to teach the reader something, did it succeed? Was something learned from reading this book, if so what? If not, why did the book failed as a teaching tool?
8. Was there a specific passage that had left an impression, good or bad? Share the passage and its effect.
9. Was the purpose of the book to bring to light an issue? If so, did it make the group more aware and knowledgeable about the particular issue? How did earlier opinions about the issue change after reading this book?
10. If the book addressed an issue, did the author cover both sides of the topic fairly and thoroughly or did the book appear to be biased, solely written to promote the author's own agenda?
11. After reading the book, has the group's interest been piqued about the subject matter? If so, would the group consider reading more on the topic in the future?
12. The way a non-fiction book is written can impact a reader's enjoyment and understanding of it. Was the book written in a way that was easily accessible? Did

the language make the group lose interest in something that would have otherwise been an exciting subject? Were unfamiliar terms and concepts explained? Were there plenty of visuals to reinforce the subject matter and were they helpful?

13. Did the author provide any pertinent web links for readers to use? If so, would the group consider visiting them?
14. Did the author provide a suggested reading list for further information on the topic? If so, would the group consider reading any of the suggestions?

## Questions for biography / memoir:

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1. What aspects of the author's story could you most relate to?
2. How honest do you think the author was being?
3. What gaps do you wish the author had filled in? Were there points where you thought he shared too much?
4. Think about the other people in the book besides the author. How would you feel to have been depicted in this way?
5. Why do you think the author chose to tell this story?

## Questions for short story / essay collections:

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1. Which short story/essay did you like best?
2. Which short story/essay did you like least?
3. What similarities do these stories share? How do they tie together?
4. Do you think any of the stories could be expanded into a full-length book?

## Questions for poetry collections:

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1. How did you read it?
2. Did you enjoy the reading experience?
3. Did you start at the beginning and work through to the end, or did you dip in at random?
4. Why did you read it the way that you did? How accessible was it?
5. How have the poems been laid out on the page? How does this impact on the reading experience?
6. Which poems stand out for you? Why?
7. What did you discover?
8. How would you describe the poet's style or way of writing?
9. Does the poet have a distinctive use of language or form?

10. How do the poems look on the page?
11. How do they sound when read aloud?
12. How does the poet use rhyme, punctuation, line breaks?
13. What sort of words does the poet use and how are they arranged?
14. What makes work by this poet different to that of another poet?
15. Can you paraphrase the poem?
16. Who is the speaker (persona) in the poem? How would you describe this persona?
17. What is the speaker's tone? Which words reveal this tone? Is the poem ironic?
18. What heavily connotative words are used? What words have unusual or special meanings? Are any words or phrases repeated? If so, why? Which words do you need to look up?
19. What images does the poet use? How do the images relate to one another? Do these images form a unified pattern (a motif) throughout the poem?
20. What figures of speech are used? How do they contribute to the tone and meaning of the poem?
21. Are there any symbols? What do they mean? Are they universal symbols or do they arise from the context of this poem?
22. What is the theme (the central idea) of this poem? Can you state it in a single sentence?
23. How important is the role of sound effects, such as rhyme and rhythm? How do they affect tone and meaning?
24. How important is the contribution of form, such as rhyme scheme and line arrangement? How does form influence the overall effect of the poem?

## THINGS TO TALK ABOUT:

**Favorites** – How did your favorite selection make you feel? Why did you connect with it, do you think?

**Themes** – Is there a noticeable theme that runs through the volume? Did you get a sense that the poet has a world view that comes through the collection of poems when read together? Were the topics large and global, or small and personal?

**Voice** – Did the poet have a distinctive voice? Was it always uniform, or did it change depending on the subject? How did it compare to other poets? Could you relate to it?

**Imagery** – Were there any descriptions that particularly leaped out at you or resonated with you?

**Language** – Were there any uses that caught you by surprise? Did meaning come through clearly, or did you find it harder to get a sense of the poet's intention? Do they rely on physical descriptions, setting, rhythm, pacing? If you've read more than one poet for the club, how do their uses of language vary?

## Questions for an author visit:

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1. Ask about the writing process. How long did their book take to write? To get published?
2. Does the author sit down at a desk to write for 8 hours a day, for example, or do they wait until the mood strikes?
3. Do they have an office? What is it like? Do they write in longhand? On a laptop?
4. Who are their favorite authors? Who inspires them?
5. When did the author know he/she was a “real” writer? At what point were they able to quit their day job? Was their family supportive?
6. Ask about the cover. Did the author have any say in the design? Is there more than one cover?
7. If the author you’re speaking with has won an award, you could ask how the award changed their lives.
8. Ask about character development. How is this done? Are characters based on real people? Are events based on actual events?
9. Had the author ever considered a different ending to the story? If possible, would they go back and change anything?
10. Is a movie in the works
11. If they had a choice, what actor would they cast in the leading role?
12. What are you working on now?

## Other discussion ideas:

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1. If discussion stalls, ask participants about other books they have read recently, books that they have read multiple times, books that they would recommend to others (or to the book club).
2. Nancy Pearl has identified the four doorways into reading, aka the four reasons people fall in love with books. Participants can discuss their reasons for loving a book and how the book for this month’s club excels/fails in these categories.

### The Four Doors

**STORY** — Plot. Action. The sequence of events that the character(s) go through to reach the end. These are page turners, the books you can’t down, and that keep you needing to find out what happens next.

**CHARACTER** — People. Protagonists. Villains. Heroes. The cast of characters who embark on the story. Books in which the characters feel real and you miss them when the book is over.

**SETTING** — Worldbuilding. This is what makes you feel like you're in another place or time (or even this exact place and time). Makes the world feel familiar, and makes you want to live in or visit that place.

**LANGUAGE** — Words. Grammar. Style. These books make you want to savor every word, to the point where you're not sure you even know or care what the book is about.

## Sources:

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