

Type and Cross Book Club Discussion Questions

Opening

1. How did you *experience the book*?
Were you immediately engrossed, or did it take a while to get into the action and get to know the characters? Did the book interest, amuse, or irritate you? Did you feel disturbed or alienated in any way?
 2. What *style* is it written in?
Is it written in the first person, third person intimate? Omniscient or second person? Maybe a combination? Is the story told from one point of view or many? What genre is it? Is this a genre that you're familiar with? Does the book 'break the mold' in any ways?
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Characters

3. Who are the key *characters*?
Whose point of view is this story told in, or are there more than one? How does the point of view character affect the information you get? Does the voice of a character ring true? Are the characters or their circumstances familiar to you?
 4. What do the *characters do*?
Do they behave how you would in a similar situation? Are their actions troubling? Do they react in consistent manners to their personalities? If not, is it reasonable for anyone to be expected to act with what would be consistent character traits?
 5. Do you find the *characters convincing*?
Are the characters believable? Did they seem true-to-life? Were they interesting? Are they fully developed or one-dimensional? Can you empathize with them?
 6. Which characters do you particularly *admire or dislike*?
Describe them. What are their main personality traits? Why do you feel the way you do about them?
 7. Choose a character. What *motivates* that character's actions?
Are those actions justified? Ethical? Can they be one and not the other? Does that character change during the course of the novel? How? What is the character arc? Is the change for the better for that character? For the rest of the characters?
 8. Who in this book would you most *like to meet*?
Why? What would you talk about?
 9. If you could *become a character* in the book, what role would you play?
Are you an existing character? Why did you choose that one? Would you do anything differently? Are you a new character not in the book? Why is that character necessary?
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Setting

10. Where does the *book take place*?
Does the setting impact the telling of the story or could it happen anywhere? Does the location change during the book or stay the same? If it changes, does this have any effect on the central characters?
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Plot

11. Is the *plot well-developed*?
Do you believe the story could happen? Does the plot unfold naturally, organically? Or do events seem contrived?
 12. Is the story *plot or character driven*?
If events unfold quickly, it's likely plot driven. If more time is spent developing characters' inner lives, it's likely character driven. Which do you think this is? What evidence supports your belief? Would it make a difference to you if it was the other option? Would you enjoy it more or less? Why?
 13. Consider *the ending*.
Were you surprised by the ending, or did you see it coming? Were there enough details supporting the climax and conclusion, or did it seem forced? Did it wrap up all the loose ends convincingly? Was something left unresolved, or did everything work out too neatly?
 14. If you could *rewrite the ending*, would you?
Was the end satisfying? Why or why not? If it wasn't satisfying, what would you change?
 15. Project into *the future*.
What do you think will happen to the characters next? Does the author plan a sequel? If so, will you read it?
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Theme

16. What is the *book about*?
Does the book have a central theme or many themes? Define it/them. If more than one theme, how do they interrelate? Is one theme more dominant than others? Are the themes organically revealed in the plot, or does it seem like the author is belaboring a point?
 17. Did you notice the significance of *flowers* in the book?
What do flowers mean? Is any one kind of flower more important than another? For whom are flowers most significant? Why?
 18. What is the importance of *the lake* in the book?
Is the location what's important? Is it the lake itself, or the people at it? Is there a correlation between the symbol of purification of water and the healing the characters go through?
 19. What about the *animals* in the book?
Did Faith's concern for animal rights strike you as extreme or as important? Could the others have done more to support her? Did the family's experience with first Cornelius and then Duke play a significant role in analyzing any themes in the book?
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Feelings

20. Can you *pick out a passage* that resonates with you?
Did something strike you as profound? Was there a part that was particularly interesting or compelling? Was there one section that summed up the central dilemma of the book?
21. What did you *like or dislike*?
Did you like the book or not? Is it possible to find a book interesting without 'enjoying'?

it? If you didn't enjoy it, who might? Does your age/gender/religion/race impact your enjoyment of the story? Would you have enjoyed the story more ten years ago? Ten years from now? Why?

22. How did the book *affect you*?

Have you 'changed' or 'grown' from reading this story? Did it expand your knowledge or challenge your assumptions? Did reading it help you to understand a person better—perhaps a friend or relative, or even yourself?

23. Before you read the novel, what were *your expectations*?

Did the book live up to them? Had you read reviews before reading it? Do you find yourself agreeing with the reviewers or not? Do you think the book jacket synopsis and cover art do a good job of indicating the type of book it is? Would you give it as a gift? If so, who would you give it to? Will you read it again? Is this book one you would keep and display on a shelf? If so, what if your collection was reduced by half—would it make the cut?

24. Does the book remind you of *your own life*?

Was there any part that you could relate to personally, or through the experiences of a friend, family member, boss, or co-worker? Would you want to experience any of these events? If so, which ones and why? If not, why not?

Logistics

25. When was the *book written*?

Does it fit with literature of its time? Is it behind in some areas, advanced in others? Will it stand the test of time, or will it seem dated? What might have to change for this story to still be viable in the future?

Author

26. If you were to *talk with the author*, what one thing would you ask or say?

What made this the item you focused on? Is it a weakness in the novel? A suggestion?

27. Have you read the *author's other books*?

Are there any constants or similarities—in theme, writing style, structure—between them? Or are they completely different? Compare and contrast this book with another novel your club has read.

28. What do you know *about the author*?

Is the book in any way autobiographical? Has the author's experiences colored the book? Is the novel similar to other stories the author has written? Has the author's writing evolved in any way from her earlier works?