



More Suggestions for Discussion Leaders



There are many ways to approach a book discussion, any of which can be effective. In deciding how to lead a discussion, consideration should be given to such things as:

- What type of group – is this group a club that meets regularly so that members know one another or is it a community forum with diverse attendees, unknown to the discussion leader? What age are the participants – adults of mixed generations, one demographic, or young adults (teens). The type of group may have an influence of the type of discussion the leader plans.
- What size is the group, or anticipated group? This may impact the discussion format – one large discussion versus small group discussions, for example.
- What is the time span allotted for the discussion? Be realistic in deciding how much can be accomplished in the time allotted. However, the leader should always have alternatives in mind in case the group dynamics are such that it is evident that Plan A will likely not work. It is best to over plan and not have time to finish than to finish too early leaving participants feeling.
- What is the primary goal you hope to accomplish through the discussion? What is the one most important idea or theme you want participants to leave thinking about? Make sure your plan centers around that goal.
- What type of discussion are you comfortable facilitating? Discussions can center around two general types of questions.
 - One type, typical of many discussion guides found online, contains a fairly long list of specific questions about specific incidents or characters in the book. The discussion leader will need notes and page references to help participants consider relevant passages. Discussion leaders will probably want to have 10 or more questions prepared but know which questions to be prepared to skip if time runs out.
 - Another type of question is an open-ended question that addresses large issues or themes in the book. These types of questions usually have no exact right or wrong answer but allow participants to express their own understanding of the topic. With this type of questions, discussion leaders should have notes of specific sections to which participants can be referred as they express their opinion and/or to help jump start the discussion. If using this type of question, the discussion leader should endeavor to stay as neutral as possible, allowing participants to give their own interpretation but can guide participants through follow up questions to explore important points or issues that participants have not addressed. If using open ended questions, discussion usually focus on only a few questions, possibly only two or three, depending on the time available.

For additional information, visit The Big Read: One Book/One Community website,
www.ReadOneBook.org

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