



What types of symbolism do you find in this novel? What do these objects really represent?

What themes - motherhood, self-discovery, wilderness - recur throughout the book?

What is the great strength - or most noticeable weakness - of the book?

What did the author try to do in the book?

Was he or she successful?

Think outside the book

What is the author's worldview?

Does this book fit into or fight against a literary genre? Does this book typify a regional (Southern, western) novel?

Does the book address broader social issues?

Helpful Resources for Selecting Books

(*some also provide discussion questions)

Bookmarks Magazine (available at the library and at bookstores)

*www.readinggroupguides.com

*www.readinggroupchoices.com/

www.indiebound.org/reading-group-indie-next-list

www.bookclubgirl.com/

*www.bookbrowse.com

www.bookclubcookbook.com



Adult Public Book Groups

Princeton Public Library

Book Journeys

Circulo de Lectura (Spanish)

Elm Court (Local Seniors)

Fiction

Guys Read (Intergenerational)

Mystery

Talking Politics

The Jewish Center – Women's Reading Group

YWCA – Newcomer's Group and more

*check ywcaprinceton.org for more groups

Bucks County Community College

www.bucks.edu/releases/BookGroupFall08.html

Princeton Adult School, reading and literature programs differ by session

Princeton Senior Resource Center - Evergreen Forum

Barnes and Noble - Fiction Lovers, a Mystery Book Group and a Literary Fiction Book Group Borders

Princeton Public Library

Books and Reading Page

www.princetonlibrary.org/princeton/reads

Contact Kristin Friberg

609.924.9529, ext. 257

kfriberg@princetonlibrary.org

Content adapted from the Washington Center for the Book at the Seattle



How do I start a Book Group?

Prepared by Kristin Friberg

Princeton Public Library

October 2008





Getting Members

Word-of-mouth

Post a flier on community message boards

Post a message on online sites like:

Meetup.com

wwptoday.com

Craigslist.org

Getting Started

Before (or at) your first meeting, discuss:

When, where and how often your book group will meet

How long each meeting will last

Where will you meet?

Panera

Library

Small World

Whether you will serve refreshments

The role of the leader (or if you will have one)

Who develops the discussion questions

What types of books will you read and discuss

Choosing Good Books for Discussion

Look for books with complex characters who are forced to make difficult choices under difficult situations. Books that spell out everything leave little to discuss.

Keep in mind that paperbacks will be less expensive.

Check the library's book group tables to get an idea what other people are reading.



Try the following types of books:

Books with unclear endings.

For example, not everyone agrees about what actually happened in Tim O'Brien's "In the Lake of the Woods," James Buchan's "The Persian Bride" or Marilynne Robinson's "Housekeeping." "Angle of Repose" by Wallace Stegner.

Books you can read together.

You can discuss both books at the same meeting or in separate meetings. Examples: "Reading Lolita in Tehran" by Azar Nafisi and "Lolita" by Vladimir Nabokov; "Truth and Beauty" by Ann Patchett and "Autobiography of a Face" by Lucy Grealy; "Persepolis" and "Persepolis 2" by Marjane Satrapi.

Books that raise many issues.

Examples: "A Lesson Before Dying" by Ernest Gaines, "The Sweet Hereafter" by Russell Banks, Not everyone will like every book the group chooses. That's OK. We all have different likes and dislikes.

Leading the Discussion

Have 10-15 open-ended questions that can't be answered "yes" or "no." Or ask each group member to bring one discussion question.

Let the discussion flow naturally.

Push members beyond "I just didn't like it" statements. Ask them to describe why a book was unappealing. Books that inspire strong reactions - positive and negative - lead to some of the best discussions.



Balance the discussion between personal thoughts and responses to the book. Groups that spend a lot of time reminiscing or sharing personal reflections are no longer book discussion groups.

Learning More About an Author

Discussion leaders may want to bring background information about the author and book to a meeting. A few helpful online resources available from the library's database page include:

Literature Resource Center

Literary Reference Center

Coming Up With Good Discussion Questions Examine the book

How does the title relate to the book?

How believable are the characters? Which character do you identify with?

What makes the main character sympathetic, or unsympathetic?

Why do certain characters act the way they act? Do they have an ax to grind, a political ideology, religious belief, or psychological disorder?

Are the plot and subplots believable and interesting? What loose ends, if any, did the author leave?

How is the book structured? Flashbacks? Many points of view? Why do you think the author chose to write the book this way?

How does the way the book is arranged help or detract from the ideas it contains?