



# THE CABIN

WORDS WORK WONDERS

## Welcome! Book Club Celebration

The Cabin (Log Cabin Literary Center) incorporated as a nonprofit organization in 1996. Its mission is to inspire and celebrate a love of reading, writing and discourse.

The Cabin annually serves about 750 members, more than 2,000 children and youth, and more than 20,000 people through educational and cultural programs. Programs for young people are the largest part of The Cabin's work.

The Cabin has transitioned from a young literary organization to a cultural anchor in Idaho. It serves diverse constituencies through:

- **READINGS & CONVERSATIONS**, an annual lecture series bringing nationally-acclaimed literary figures to Boise
- **WRITERS IN THE SCHOOLS (WITS)**, placing professional writers in classrooms

- **IDAHO WRITING CAMPS**, one of ten model arts education programs in the U.S.
- **IDAHO WRITERS GUILD**, writers working for writers
- Literary activities such as classes and writing workshops, readings by Idaho authors, and other programs for readers and writers of all ages

The Cabin is grateful to have a growing and loyal base of support, and it enjoys a strong reputation for programmatic achievements and services to the community.

The Cabin's administrative offices are housed in our restored log cabin, listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Four full-time staff and two part-time staff are supported by a strong membership and volunteer base. The Cabin is governed by a 22-member board of directors. Recent renovations to our building have made The Cabin accessible to all, and further plans are to triple the usable space for meetings, receptions, exhibits, readings, workshops, program offices, library and a publishing room.

You are invited to become a member of The Cabin. Membership at any level supports our programs and the building restoration. To discuss group gifts, naming opportunities, and other individual contributions, please call 331-8000.

The Cabin received The Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts in 2006.

**Book Group:** AAUW Book Group  
**Contact:** Sylvia Campbell  
**Phone:** 629-0490  
**Email:** sylviacampbell@cableone.net

<b>Book Titles for 2010</b>	<b>Author</b>
<i>All the Pretty Horses</i>	Cormac McCarthy
<i>The Guernsey Literary &amp; Potato Peel Pie Society</i>	Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows
<i>The Miracle Life of Edgar Mint</i>	Brady Udall
<i>In the Skin of a Lion</i>	Michael Ondaatje
<i>The Elegance of the Hedgehog</i>	Muriel Barbery
<i>Pope Joan</i>	Donna Woolfolk Cross
<i>The Worst Hard Times</i>	Tom Egan
<i>Jazz</i>	Toni Morrison
<i>Outliers: The Story of Success</i>	Malcomb Gladwell
<i>Travel as a Political Act</i>	Rick Steves
<i>Grain of Wheat</i>	Ngugi wa Thiongo'o
<i>The Story of Edgar Sawtelle</i>	David Wroblewski

**Notes and/or Comments:**

<b>Book Group:</b>	<b>Applewood Readers</b>
<b>Contact:</b>	Vera Noye
<b>Phone:</b>	377-3680
<b>Email:</b>	Venoyce1@cableone.net

<b>Book Titles for 2010</b>	<b>Author</b>
<i>South of Broad</i>	Pat Conroy
<i>When She Flew</i>	Jennie Shortridge
<i>The Hotel on the Corner of Bitter &amp; Sweet</i>	Jamie Ford
<i>Home &amp; Langley</i>	E.L. Dotorow
<i>The 19<sup>th</sup> Wife</i>	David Ebershoff
<i>Zeitoun</i>	Dave Eggers
<i>The Lacuna</i>	Barbara Kingsolver
<i>Awaiting Your Reply</i>	Dan Chaon
<i>Guernsey Literary &amp; Potato Peel Society</i>	Shaffer & Barrows
<i>The Year of the Flood</i>	Margaret Atwood

**Notes and/or Comments:**

Meetings take place at the Applewood Clubhouse, at 7:30 PM, every 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday.

Good sites to buy used books  
 Good site for book reviews  
 Good site for discussion questions  
 Good site for book lists

amazon.com and buy.com  
 reviewsofbooks.com  
 readinggroupguides.com  
 bookmovement.com

<b>Book Group:</b>	<b>Barnes &amp; Noble Fiction Literature</b>
<b>Contact:</b>	Laura Jonio
<b>Phone:</b>	(208) 375-4454
<b>Email:</b>	crm2740@bn.com

<b>Book Titles for 2010</b>	<b>Author</b>
January – <i>War and Peace</i>	Leo Tolstoy
February – <i>Boone's Lick</i>	Larry McMurtry
March – <i>Out Stealing Horses</i>	Per Petterson
April – <i>The Book Thief</i>	Markus Zusak
May – <i>The True Story of Hansel &amp; Gretel</i>	Louise Murphy
June – <i>The 19<sup>th</sup> Wife</i>	David Ebershoff

**Notes and/or Comments:**

Meets 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of each month at 7:00 pm at Barnes & Noble, 1315 N Milwaukee, Boise, Idaho 83704

<b>Book Group:</b>	<b>Bad Girls Book Group</b>
<b>Contact:</b>	Peggy McClendon
<b>Phone:</b>	336-2386
<b>Email:</b>	peggy-gary@cableone.net

<b>Book Titles for 2010</b>	<b>Author</b>
<i>Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society</i>	Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows
<i>March</i>	Geraldine Brooks
<i>My Life in France</i>	Julia Childs
<i>Unaccustomed Earth</i>	Jhumpa Lahari
<i>The Other</i>	David Guterson
<i>The Post American World</i>	Fareed Zakaria
<i>Olive Kitteridge</i>	Elizabeth Strout
<i>The Camel Bookmobile</i>	Masha Hamilton
<i>The Looming Tower</i>	Lawrence Wright
<i>A Mercy</i>	Toni Morrison
<i>Strength in What Remains</i>	Tracy Kidder

**Notes and/or Comments:**

<b>Book Group:</b>	<b>BOOBS</b>
<b>Contact:</b>	Connie Weaver
<b>Phone:</b>	344-5325
<b>Email:</b>	Dreamweaver1407@earthlink.net

<b>Book Titles for 2010</b>	<b>Author</b>
<i>Nineteen Minutes</i>	Jodi Picoult
<i>Snow Flower and The Secret Fan</i>	Lisa See
<i>The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Society</i>	Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows
<i>The Mole People: Life in the Tunnels Beneath New York City</i>	Jennifer Toth
<i>Loving Frank</i>	Nancy Horan
<i>The Story of Edgar Sawtelle</i>	David Wroblewski
<i>The Portrait of a Lady</i>	Henry James
<i>The Outliers: The Story of Success</i>	Malcolm Gladwell
<i>The Help</i>	Kathryn Stockett
<i>The White Lioness</i>	Henning Mankell
<i>My Stroke of Insight</i>	Jill B. Taylor

**Notes and/or Comments:**

<b>Book Group:</b>	<b>Book Club Friends</b>
<b>Contact:</b>	Barbara Olic-Hamilton
<b>Phone:</b>	344-3778
<b>Email:</b>	n/a

<b>Book Titles for 2010</b>	<b>Author</b>
<i>The Thirteenth Tale</i>	Diane Setterfield
<i>The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo</i>	Steig Larsson
<i>The Long Walk—The True Story of a Trek to Freedom</i>	Slavomir Rawicz
<i>The Last Chinese Chef</i>	Nicole Mones
<i>The Lost City of Z</i>	David Grann
<i>The Elegance of the Hedgehog</i>	Muriel Barbery
<i>Best European Fiction 2010</i>	Aleksandar Hemon, editor
<i>The Women</i>	T.C. Boyle
<i>Best American Essays 2009</i>	Mary Oliver, editor

**Notes and/or Comments:**

<b>Book Group:</b>	<b>Book Club with No Name</b>
<b>Contact:</b>	Susan Stacy
<b>Phone:</b>	344-7371
<b>Email:</b>	sstacy@spro.net

<b>Book Titles for 2010</b>	<b>Author</b>
<i>Outliers</i>	Malcom Gladwell
<i>The Book Thief</i>	Marcus Zusak
<i>Red Scarf Girl</i>	Ji Li Jiang
<i>Loosing Mum and Pup</i>	Christopher Buckley
<i>The Great Fire</i>	Shirley Hazzard
<i>Free: The Future of a Radical Price</i>	Chris Anderson
<i>Purple Hibiscus</i>	Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
<i>House of Rain</i>	Craig Childs
<i>The Worst Hard Time</i>	Timothy Egan

**Notes and/or Comments:**

<b>Book Group:</b>	<b>First Sunday Book Club</b>
<b>Contact:</b>	Darlyne Pape
<b>Phone:</b>	208 344-6986
<b>Email:</b>	litmom10@aol.com

<b>Book Titles for 2010</b>	<b>Author</b>
<i>The Madonnas of Leningrad</i>	Debra Dean
<i>The Story of Edgar Sawtelle</i>	David Wroblewski
<i>The Space Between Us</i>	Thrity N. Umrigar
<i>The 19<sup>th</sup>. Wife</i>	David Ebershoff
<i>The Infidel</i>	Ayaan Hirsi Ali
<i>The Help</i>	Kathryn Stockett
<i>The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo</i>	Stieg Larsson
<i>The Elegance of the Hedgehog</i>	Muriel Barbery
<i>The Art of Racing in the Rain</i>	Garth Stein
<i>Olive Kitteridge</i>	Elizabeth Strout
<i>Straight Man</i>	Richard Russo
<i>Ragtime</i>	E. L. Doctorow

**Notes and/or Comments:**

<b>Book Group:</b>	<b>Flick's Book Club</b>
<b>Contact:</b>	Joan Wallace
<b>Phone:</b>	343-8465
<b>Email:</b>	joanlwallace@cableone.net

<b>Book Titles for 2010</b>	<b>Author</b>
<i>The Remains of The Day</i>	Kazuo Ishiguro
<i>Let The Great World Spin</i>	Colum McCann
<i>The Help</i>	Kathryn Stockett
<i>The Worst Hard Time</i>	Tim Egan
<i>The Guernsey Literary &amp; Potato Peel Pie Society</i>	Mary Ann Shaffer/Annie Burrows
<i>Olive Kitteridge</i>	Elizabeth Strout
<i>Mudbound</i>	Hillary Jordan
<i>Espresso Tales</i>	Alexander McCall-Smith
<i>A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian</i>	Marina Lewycka
<i>Family Matters</i>	Rohinton Mistry
<i>The Vintage Caper</i>	Peter Mayle

**Notes and/or Comments:**

<b>Book Group:</b>	<b>Literature Book Club at Barnes &amp; Noble</b>
<b>Contact:</b>	Mary Kruzich
<b>Phone:</b>	343-2766
<b>Email:</b>	marykruzich@msn.com

<b>Book Titles for 2010</b>	<b>Author</b>
<i>Telex from Cuba</i>	Rachel Kushner
<i>Passions &amp; Impressions</i>	Pablo Neruda
<i>The Guernsey Literary &amp; Potato Peel Society</i>	Mary Ann Shaffer & Annie Barrows
<i>A Tale of Two Cities</i>	Charles Dickens
<i>War &amp; Peace</i>	Leo Tolstoy
<i>Boone's Lick</i>	Larry McMurtry
<i>Out Stealing Horses</i>	Per Petterson
<i>The Book Thief</i>	Markus Zusak
<i>The True Story of Hansel &amp; Gretel</i>	Louise Murphy
<i>The 19<sup>th</sup> Wife</i>	David Ebershoff

**Notes and/or Comments:**

This group meets at Barnes & Noble at 7:00 PM on the fourth Monday of each month. New members are welcome.

<b>Book Group:</b>	<b>Lit Chicks and a Rooster</b>
<b>Contact:</b>	Dede Ryan
<b>Phone:</b>	331-8000
<b>Email:</b>	dede@thecabinidaho.org

<b>Book Titles for 2010</b>	<b>Author</b>
<i>Dreams from My Father</i>	Barack Obama
<i>Montana 1948</i>	Lawrence Watson
<i>Out Stealing Horses</i>	Per Petterson
<i>Snow Flower and the Secret Fan</i>	Lisa See
<i>The Book Thief</i>	Markus Zusak
<i>The Mayor of Casterbridge</i>	Thomas Hardy
<i>Year of Wonders</i>	Geraldine Brooks
<i>The Shadow of the Sun</i>	Ryszard Kapuscinski
<i>At Home at the End of the World</i>	Michael Cunningham
<i>The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time</i>	Mark Haddon
<i>The Elegance of the Hedgehog</i>	Muriel Barbery

**Notes and/or Comments:**

(Full boat for now; not accepting new members.)

<b>Book Group:</b>	<b>Literature for Lunch</b>
<b>Contact:</b>	Cheryl Hindrichs/Carol Martin
<b>Phone:</b>	426-7072/426-1179
<b>Email:</b>	cherylhindrichs@boisestate.edu/ cmartin@boisestate.edu

<b>Book Titles for 2010</b>	<b>Author</b>
<i>Silas Marner</i>	George Eliot
<i>The Return of the Native</i>	Thomas Hardy
<i>Death in Venice</i>	Thomas Mann
<i>The Good Soldier</i>	Ford Madox Ford

**Notes and/or Comments:**

Book discussions are held at the Boise Public Library, 715 S. Capitol Blvd., from 12:10 to 1 p.m., and are free and open to the public. No reservations required. Books are available at "A Novel Adventure," 906 W. Main Street (phone 344-8088), which will give a 20% discount, and at the BSU Bookstore (426-1362), which will give a 25% discount and validate ½ hour parking in the Administration Building lot (enter at the light at the intersection of University Dr. and Joyce St.).

<b>Book Group:</b>	<b>Nampa Read &amp; Feed Book Club</b>
<b>Contact:</b>	Angie Wensel & Alita Svaty
<b>Phone:</b>	467-1324                      459-0348
<b>Email:</b>	Wensel55@msn.com amsvaty@speedyquick.net

<b>Book Titles for 2010</b>	<b>Author</b>
<i>The Help</i>	Stockett, Kathryn
<i>Still Alice</i>	Genova, Lisa
<i>Loving Frank</i>	Horan, Nancy
<i>The Book Thief</i>	Zusak, Markus
<i>Inez of My Soul</i>	Allende, Isabel
<i>The Longest Trip Home</i>	Grogan, John
<i>Zelda</i>	Milford, Nancy
<i>The Name Sake</i>	Lahiri, Jhumpa
<i>On Agate Hill</i>	Smith, Lee
<i>The Stranger</i>	Camus, Albert
<i>Half Broke Horse</i>	Walls, Jeanette

**Notes and/or Comments:**

<b>Book Group:</b>	<b>Novel Women!</b>
<b>Contact:</b>	Not accepting new members at this time.
<b>Phone:</b>	
<b>Email:</b>	

<b>Book Titles for 2010</b>	<b>Author</b>
<i>Mudbound</i>	Hillary Jordan
<i>Monique and the Mango Rains</i>	Monique Debele
<i>The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society</i>	Mary Ann Shaffer, Annie Barrows
<i>Ines of My Soul</i>	Isabele Allende
<i>The Moonflower Vine: A Novel (P.S.)</i>	Jetta Carleton
<i>The Air We Breathe: A Novel</i>	Andrea Barrett
<i>Loving Frank: A Novel</i>	Nancy Horan
<i>The Moonstone</i>	Wilkie Collins
<i>The Commoner: A Novel</i>	John Burnham Schwartz
<i>The Hemingses of Monticello: An American Family</i>	Annette Gordon-Reed
<i>The Story of a Thousand Blossom</i>	Gail Tsukiyama
<i>March</i>	Geraldine Brooks
<i>Pride and Prejudice</i>	Jane Austen
<i>The Zookeeper's Wife</i>	Diane Ackerman

**Notes and/or Comments:**

<b>Book Group:</b>	<b>The Paper Dolls</b>
<b>Contact:</b>	Deb Holleran
<b>Phone:</b>	208-336-1760
<b>Email:</b>	Holl77@cableone.net

<b>Book Titles for 2010</b>	<b>Author</b>
<i>Pillars Of The Earth</i>	Ken Follet
<i>The Shack</i>	William P. Young
<i>The Guernsey Literary &amp; Potato Peel Pie Society</i>	Mary Ann Shaffer
<i>The Next Thing On My List</i>	Jill Smolinski
<i>Girls Like Us, Carole King, Joni Mitchell, Carly Simon</i>	Sheila Walker
<i>Stones From The River</i>	Ursula Hegi
<i>The Book Thief</i>	Markus Zusak
<i>Hotel On The Corner Of Bitter &amp; Sweet</i>	Jamie Ford

**Notes and/or Comments:**

<b>Book Group:</b>	<b>Partners in Crime Readers Group</b>
<b>Contact:</b>	Anne Robinson
<b>Phone:</b>	672-8607
<b>Email:</b>	annerobinson@cableone.net

<b>Book Titles for 2010</b>	<b>Author</b>
<i>Sacrifice</i>	S. J. Bolton
<i>Still Waters</i>	Nigel McCrery
<i>Dog on It</i>	Spencer Quinn
<i>Promised Land</i>	Robert B. Parker
<i>The Dark Horse</i>	Craig Johnson
<i>The Wrong Mother</i>	Sophie Hannah
<i>An Expert in Murder</i>	Nicola Upson
<i>Remainder To Be Determined</i>	

**Notes and/or Comments:**

Meets at 7:00 pm on the fourth Tuesday of each month at The Rediscovered Bookshop, 7079 Overland Rd., Boise.

<b>Book Group:</b>	<b>The Book Club</b>
<b>Contact:</b>	Mary Tate
<b>Phone:</b>	344 7092
<b>Email:</b>	tates1@mindspring.com

<b>Book Titles for 2010</b>	<b>Author</b>
<i>Anna Karenina</i>	Leo Tolstoy
<i>My Stroke of Insight</i>	Jill Bolte Taylor
<i>Purple Hibiscus</i>	Chimamanda Ngozi Adichi
<i>Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Society</i>	Ann Schaffer/Annie Barrows
<i>Someone Knows My Name</i>	Lawrence Hill
<i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i>	Harriet Beecher Stowe
<i>The Feast of the Goat</i>	Marco Vargas Llosa
<i>No God But God</i>	Reza Aslan
<i>The Vagrants</i>	Yiyun Li
<i>The Elegance of the Hedgehog</i>	Muriel Barbery

**Notes and/or Comments:**

<b>Book Group:</b>	<b>The Bookies</b>
<b>Contact:</b>	Mary Ann Newcomer
<b>Phone:</b>	345-9959
<b>Email:</b>	idahogardener@gmail.com

<b>Book Titles for 2010</b>	<b>Author</b>
<i>The Help</i>	Kate Stockett
<i>Half a Yellow Sun</i>	Adiche
<i>Half Broke Horses</i>	Jeanette Walls
<i>The Big Burn</i>	Timothy Egan
<i>The Girls from Ames</i>	Jeffrey Zaslow
<i>Lit</i>	Mary Karr
<i>Border Songs</i>	Jim Lynch
<i>Lake Overturn</i>	Vestal McIntyre
<i>Wolf Hall</i>	Hilary Mantel
<i>Louisa May Alcott: The Woman</i>	Harriet Reisen
<i>Mountain Time</i>	Ivan Doig

**Notes and/or Comments:**

<b>Book Group:</b>	<b>Women, Wine and Words</b>
<b>Contact:</b>	Vicki Flume
<b>Phone:</b>	949-5586
<b>Email:</b>	Vicki@meetingsystems.com

<b>Book Titles for 2010</b>	<b>Author</b>
<i>Outliers</i>	Malcolm Gladwell
<i>Infidel</i>	Ayaan Hirsi Ali
<i>Molokai</i>	Alan Brennert
<i>Between Two Worlds: Escape from Tyranny: Growing up in the Shadow of Sadaam</i>	Zainab Salbi
<i>The Agony and the Ecstasy</i>	Irving Stone
<i>Elegance of the Hedgehog</i>	Muriel Barberry
<i>Rain of Gold</i>	Victor Villasenor
<i>Tom and Julia Davis – Some Good Place</i>	Susan Stacy

**Notes and/or Comments:**

## HOW TO SET UP A BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

### Preplanning and organizing the first meeting

- **Make clear what is expected of participants.**  
Careful reading, active participation in selecting and discussing books, and having fun.
- **Decide what types of books your group wants to read.**  
Only fiction? Prize winners? Classics? Anything and everything?  
Does the book have to be available in paperback?
- **Figure out the logistics.**  
How long should the meetings be? (We find that the best discussions last between 45 and 90 minutes.) Will you meet at a library? Coffee shop? Private homes? Send reminder messages via mail, emails, or phone?
- **Decide how the book club will be run.**  
Will you have a leader? Will the same person be in charge for each meeting, or will you rotate leaders? Some groups bring in an outside "expert" (who may need to be paid). Do you want the leader to give a brief biography of the author and a selection of reviews of the book under discussion?
- **Choosing the books to discuss.**  
Choosing what books to read is one of the hardest, most enjoyable, frustrating, and important activities the group will undertake. Members of the group should be prepared to compromise and to read outside their regular areas of interest. (Some people will drop out if the books chosen are not what they want to read; don't worry, this is a normal occurrence.) Go with the majority opinion, but remind people that there can be a big difference between "a good read" and "a good book for a discussion." (See next section.) Choose books well in advance (at least three months). People need to know what's coming up so they can read ahead. In addition, you don't want to have to spend time at each meeting deciding what to read next.

## **What makes a good book for discussion?**

People often ask what qualities make a book a good candidate for book discussion. Probably the most important criteria are that the book be well written, have an interesting plot, and three-dimensional characters. Good book-discussion books present the author's view of an important truth and sometimes send a message to the reader. A good book-discussion book often stays in the reader's mind long after the book is finished and the discussion is over. These books can be read more than once, and each time the reader learns something new.

During a book discussion, what you're really talking about is everything that the author hasn't said--all those white spaces on the printed page. For this reason, books that are plot driven (most mysteries, westerns, romances, and science fiction/fantasy) don't lend themselves to book discussions. In genre novels and some mainstream fiction, the author spells out everything for the reader, so that there is little to say except, "Gee, I never knew that" or "Isn't that interesting." Librarians, booksellers, and friends can often supply you with suggestions of good books to discuss.

(Incidentally, this "everything that the author hasn't said" idea is why poetry makes such a rich topic for discussion.)

## **Reading critically**

The very best books are those that insinuate themselves into your experience: They reveal an important truth or provide a profound sense of kinship between reader and writer. Searching for, identifying, and discussing these truths deepen the reader's appreciation of the book.

Asking questions, reading carefully, imagining yourself in the story, analyzing style and structure, and searching for personal meaning in a work of literature all enhance the work's value and the discussion potential for your group.

- **Make notes and mark pages as you go.**  
Reading for a book discussion -- whether you are the leader or simply a participant -- differs somewhat from reading purely for pleasure. As you read a book in preparation for a discussion, ask questions of yourself and mark down pages you might want to refer back to. Make notes like, "Is this significant?" or "Why does the author include

this?" Making notes as you go slows down your reading but saves you the time of searching out important passages later.

- **Ask tough questions of yourself and the book.**  
Obviously, asking questions of yourself as you read means you don't know the answer yet, and sometimes you never will discover the answers. Don't be afraid to ask hard questions because often the author is presenting difficult issues for that very purpose. Look for questions that may lead to in-depth conversations with your group and make the book more meaningful.
- **Pay attention to the author's message.**  
As with any skill, critical reading improves with practice. Remember that a good author uses every word in a text deliberately. Try to be aware of what the author is revealing about himself and what he wants you to learn about life from his perspective.
- **Analyze themes.**  
Try to analyze the important themes of a book and to consider what premise the author started with. Imagine an author mulling over the beginnings of the story, asking herself, "what if ... " questions.
- **Get to know the characters.**  
When you meet the characters in the book, place yourself at the scene. Think of them as you do the people around you. Judge them. Think about their faults and their motives. What would it be like to interact with them? Are the tone and style of their dialogue authentic? Read portions aloud to get to know the voices of the characters.
- **Notice the structure of the book.**  
Sometimes an author uses the structure of the book to illustrate an important concept or to create a mood. Notice how the author structured the book. Are chapters prefaced quotes? If so, how do they apply to the content of the chapters? How many narrators tell the story? Who are they? How does the sequence of events unfold to create the mood of the story? Is it written in flashbacks? Does the order the author chose make sense to you?
- **Make comparisons to other books and authors.**  
Compare the book to others the same author or to books other authors that have a similar theme or style. Often, themes run through

an author's works that are more fully realized comparison. Comparing one author's work with another's can help you solidify your opinions, as well as define for you qualities you may otherwise miss.

### **Leading the discussion**

Research the author using resources such as Current Biography, Contemporary Authors, Something About the Author. Find book reviews in Book Review Digest and Book Review Index. The Dictionary of Literary Biography gives biographical and critical material. These resources are probably available at your local library. The Internet is often another good source for reviews of the book and biographical information about the author.

- **Come prepared with 10 to 15 open-ended questions.** Remember, questions that can be answered yes or no tend to cut off discussion quickly.
- **Questions should be used to guide the discussion** and keep it on track, but be ready to let the discussion flow naturally. You'll often find that the questions you've prepared will come up naturally as part of the discussion.
- **Remind participants that there are not necessarily any right answers** to the questions posed.
- **Don't be afraid to criticize a book**, but try to get the group to go beyond the "I just didn't like it" statement. What was it about the book that made it unappealing? The style? The pacing? The characters? Has the author written other books that were better? Did it remind you of another book that you liked or disliked? Remember that many of the best book discussions center on books that many group members disliked.
- **Try to keep a balance in the discussion** between personal revelations and reactions and a response to the book itself. Of course, every reader responds to a book in ways that are intimately tied to his or her background, upbringing, experiences, and view of the world. A book about a senseless murder will naturally strike some sort of chord in a reader whose mother was killed. That's interesting, but what's more interesting is how the author chose to present the murder, or the

author's attitude toward the murderer and victim. It's often too easy to let a group drown in reminiscences. If that's what the whole group wants to do, just but keep in mind that it's not a book discussion.

### **Some suggestions for participants**

- **SPEAK UP!** Group discussion is like a conversation; everyone takes part in it. Each speaker responds to what the person before him said. Nobody prepares speeches; there should be a spontaneous exchange of ideas and opinions. The discussion is your chance to say what you think.
- **LISTEN** thoughtfully to others! Try to understand the other person's point of view. Don't accept ideas that don't have a sound basis. Remember, there are several points of view possible on every question.
- **BE BRIEF!** Share the discussion with others. Speak for only a few minutes at a time. Make your point in as a few words as possible. Be ready to let someone else speak. A good discussion keeps everyone in the conversation.
- **SHARE YOUR VIEWPOINT AND EXPERIENCE!** Don't expect to be called on to speak; enter into the discussion with your comments of agreement or disagreement. When you find yourself disagreeing with other people's interpretations or opinions, say so and tell why, in a friendly way. Considering all points of view is important to group discussions.
- **COME WITH YOUR OWN QUESTIONS IN MIND!** As you read the selection, make note of the points on which you'd like to hear the comments of group members.

### **Sample questions**

- What makes the book distinctive?
- Is the period in which the book is set important to the theme? Why? Are the values presented dated? How?

- Is the setting of the book important to the theme? Why? How realistic is the setting?
- Does the theme of the book relate to the protagonist's gender? How?
- What did the author attempt to do in the book? Was it successful?
- Would it make a good movie? Why?
- What is the author's worldview?
- Were the plot and subplots believable? Were they interesting?
- Did the author leave loose ends? What were they?
- How understandable were the motivations of the characters? What motivated the behavior of the characters?
- How is the book structured? Flashbacks? From one point of view? Why do you think the author chose to write the book this way?
- How does the language of the book help convey the theme?
- Does the author rely heavily on imagery and symbolism?

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