

A Few Tips for Book Group Discussion Leaders

These tips are optional – select and use the ones you like!

Before the date of the discussion of the book, send out links to additional materials, such as interviews with the author, past reviews of the book, or other related materials. These materials can be sent out through our hsbookgroup@googlegroups.com email, or they can be posted as a conversation on <https://groups.google.com/g/hsbookgroup>, our Book Group google email page. These additional materials have been appreciated by book group members. Typically they read them before the discussion, add comments about them to the discussion, and enhance the enjoyment of the meeting.

Opening a book discussion:

- Introduce the author before getting to the book—give a short biography
Mention other books written by this author if relevant
Note awards, prizes, recognition (quote statements made about this author by reviewers, etc.)
- Set the context—
Many people read the book weeks before the discussion. To refresh them, give a short overall sketch of the book, what it is about, what happens
If there is something memorable about the setting (time or place), note it
- Share your personal viewpoint—
You can say something about what drew you to the book and what made you suggest it for the book group.

General discussion themes:

- the characters (if fiction) – their problems/decisions/relationships, believability;
do readers identify with any particular character?
If this is a non-fiction book, a similar discussion can be had about the people in the book
- the book's structure – narrative devices, such as flashbacks or multiple voices
- in whose voice is the story/narrative told
- the cultural context of the book and how that affects the reader's understanding
- the author's language and writing style – poetic, vernacular, appropriate to the story, any unusual qualities—irony, humor, use of symbols
- the plot (if fiction) – believable, memorable, suspenseful, effective
- transformation and change within the characters/people in the book
- the major themes of the book – does the author sufficiently support the book's ideas?
- strengths and weaknesses of the book
- the book's ending – satisfying, unresolved, surprising, well-crafted
Does the author offer solutions, or make a call to action to readers?
- the “take-aways” from the book as experienced by readers. Is this a book that changes and/or educates the reader?

Considerations for the discussion leader:

- NOTE: if the leader has noted on a few significant passages in the book, these can be read during relevant times during the discussion to solicit others' reactions

- ask questions that allow for maximum participation
- listen carefully
- keep the discussion on the book, not too far into someone's personal experiences
- keep a balance in the discussion between allowing people to pursue the things that engage and interest them vs. moving to other topics