Generic Discussion Questions

Fiction

Our 15 general questions can get your book club discussions off to a good start. They're basic but smart

Generic questions for novels

These questions work well for any novel—use them for memoirs, biographies, and histories, as well.

1. Overall—how did you **experience the book** while reading it? Were you immediately drawn into the story—or did it take a while? Did the book intrigue, amuse, disturb, alienate, or irritate, you?

2. Do you find the characters **convincing**? Are they believable? Compelling? Are they fully developed as complex, emotional human beings?

3. Which characters do you **admire** or **dislike**? What are their primary characteristics?

4. What **motivates** a given character's actions? Do you think those actions are justified or ethical?

5. Do any characters **grow or change** during the course of the novel? If so, in what way?

6. Who in this book would you most **like to meet**? What would you ask—or say?

7. If you could **insert yourself** as character in the book, what role would you play?

8. Is the **plot well-developed**? Is it believable? Do you feel manipulated along the way, or do events unfold naturally?

9. Is the story **plot or character driven**? In other words, does the plot unfold quickly or focus more on characters' inner lives?

10. Consider the **ending.** Did you expect it or were you surprised? Was it forced? Was it neatly wrapped up—too neatly? Or was it unresolved, ending on an ambiguous note?

11. If you could **rewrite the ending**, would you? In other words, was the ending satisfying?

12. Can you **pick out a passage** that strikes you as particularly profound or interesting—or perhaps something that sums up the central dilemma of the book?

13. Does the book **remind you of someone**—a friend, family member, co-worker, boss—or something—an event, problem—in your own life?

14. If you were to **talk to the author**, what would you want to know? (Many authors enjoy talking with book clubs. Contact the publisher to see if you can set up a phone chat.)

15. Have you read the **author's other books?** Can you discern a similarity—in theme, writing style, structure—between them? Or are they completely different?

We feel smarter using your questions. They help us get to the heart of the book!

Gert Stein and Alice B. Toklas
-- Paris, France