

**Handout**

# Compelling Questions for Book Club Discussions

**Directions:** In addition to discussing the questions that your group members bring to each meeting, you can also choose a few questions from the list to help guide your discussion. The goal is not to rush through lots of questions! Rather, really explore a few questions by focusing on specific scenes in your book, making connections across chapters and to other books you have all read, and considering the ways the book connects to your own identity and experiences.

## Understanding the Characters

1. Who are the main characters in your book?
2. How do they see themselves? How do others see them?
3. What kinds of challenges do the main characters face? How do they deal with these challenges? What words of advice do you have for them?
4. What are the different groups of people in your book? Who has power and who does not? How does the amount of power each character have influence their choices? How does power influence the impact of each character's decisions?
5. Which character do you most relate to and why? Which character do you least relate to and why?

## Considering Characters' Choices

6. What choices do characters make in the chapters you just read? What other choices could they have made?
7. What are all of the factors that impact the choices characters in your book have and how they make decisions? Do you think these factors reflect what it's like in the world today? What makes you say that?
8. What are the spoken and unspoken rules of the place where your book takes place? Who makes the rules? How do the rules impact the main character of your book and the choices they have available to them? How are they similar to or different from the spoken and unspoken rules of your home, school, or community?
9. Where do you see characters acting as perpetrators of injustice or unfairness? What factors motivate their behavior?
10. Where do you see examples of characters acting as bystanders? What factors impact their decision not to take action? How might the situation in the book change if they make a different decision?

11. Where do you see characters choosing to be upstanders in your book? How do their choices and actions impact those around them? How do they feel about themselves?
12. Where do you see yourself judging characters for their decisions and actions?

### **Thinking about Perspective**

13. A character's perspective is their attitude and beliefs about the world around them. In your book, whose perspectives does the reader get to see? How does knowing this perspective impact your understanding of what is happening in the story?
14. For the character(s) whose perspective you get to see, what do they think and feel about their situation and the other characters in the book? Why do you think the author chose to develop this character's perspective?
15. Whose perspectives are missing from the story? Are there any characters who don't have a voice or who are only seen through the eyes of other characters? What do you think they are thinking and feeling? Why do you think the author chose not to develop their perspective?
16. Why do you think the author chose to tell the story from the perspective they did? What other choices could the author have made? How would it have changed the story?

### **Connecting the Book, the World, and Me**

17. How does this book reflect or not reflect your own identity or lived experiences?
18. How does this book help you understand someone else's life experience?
19. What social issues are explored in the book (i.e., racial injustice, gender discrimination, disability rights, voting rights, refugee crisis, LGBTQ+ rights, gun violence, income inequality, housing and food insecurity, the ethics of science and technology, etc.)? What message does the book send about one or more of these issues?
20. What does this book say about the world today?
21. Why do you think the author wrote this book?
22. How have you been changed or impacted by reading and discussing this book with your book club?
23. What lessons can you take from this book into your own life?