



Nothing to Lose Book Group Discussion Questions

The author has said, “I write to understand those who are different from me but learn, instead, how we are the same.” With which character do you have the most in common? The least? What new understandings do you have of people like you (or *unlike* you) after “wearing their skin” for awhile?

Some of the stories in the collection seem to have “partner stories.” Which stories would you pair with each other? How does looking at the companion stories together change or enhance your reading of them separately?

What recurring themes or symbols do you see in the book? How do they add to the collection’s overall effect?

While many of the stories touch on heavy issues, the author suggests that there are glimmers of hope in even the darkest moments. Where do you see such glimmers in the collection?

The stories in this collection have been referred to as “Midwestern Gothic” or “Midwestern Noir” in flavor. Where do you see evidence of this? How would you characterize them?

The author says her writing has been influenced by Flannery O’Connor, T.C. Boyle, and George Saunders. What stories (or films) share a kinship with the pieces in this collection for you?

Short story endings are often *not* tied up in a neat bow. Rather the author trusts the reader to understand the possibilities for what happens after the last sentence. In the various stories, what clues are given as to what will (possibly or probably) happen after the story ends? Where do you find these clues on the page?

Many writers say that, page for page, short stories take longer to write (and to read) than novels. Which story was the most challenging for you as a reader? Why?

Which of the stories was most surprising to you? Why?

Author Walter Mosely said, “A good short story crosses the borders of our nations and our prejudices and our beliefs. A good short story asks a question that can’t be answered in simple terms.” What questions do these stories seem to be asking? What seem to be the answers?