**Book Club Discussion Guide**

**Copyright ©2015 by Nancy J. Cohen**

Do you belong to a book club? Maybe you’ve always wanted to start one. But what do you discuss? Aside from determining the parameters for your group, you’ll need to figure out how analytical you care to get.

Here are some questions to jumpstart your discussion. Adapt them for your own use.

When you put the book down, were you smiling or sad? Did you feel a sense of satisfaction? If you liked the story, what elements appealed to you—The setting? The writer’s style? The fast pace? The memorable characters? Things you learned from the story? The emotional depth? The real life issues? The escapist element into another world? The happy ending? Or the ambiguous finale?

If you didn’t like the book, why not? Did the characters not engage you on an emotional level? Was the pacing plodding? Not enough action? Inaccuracies in research? Long descriptive passages that put you to sleep? A setting you found distasteful? You couldn’t relate to the characters or concept? You don’t like the genre? Your friend or book group made you read it? Would you try a book by that author again?

Why did you buy this particular book? Do you feel the expense was worthwhile? What inspires you to buy any book? Is it the author? Book cover? Endorsements? Cover copy? It’s on the Bestseller List? Recommendations by friends? Do particular story elements or tropes appeal to you? Character archetypes? How much do you read to see if the story captures your interest?

***Story Elements***

**Characters**

Do the characters seem real?

Can you identify with the hero/heroine?

If they’re not snagging your interest, why not?

Can you distinguish between different people in the story? What makes them distinctive?

Does the protagonist grow and change by the story’s end?

Are the characters memorable?

**Setting**

What is the novel’s setting?

Does it appeal to you? If so, why?

How does the author convey a sense of place?

Would you want to visit the location in the story?

Are there certain settings you avoid in a book?

**Plot**

Does the storyline develop logically?

Is the plot linear or wrought with twists and turns?

Are elements of mystery or suspense included? Are they important to you?

Is the pacing too slow, just right, or so intense you can’t put the book down?

Is there a balance between action, exposition, and dialogue?

Were you surprised or is the story predictable?

Is there a subplot? How is it related to the main plot?

**Voice**

Is the story in first person, third person, or multiple viewpoints? Which do you prefer?

What would you say is the protagonist’s attitude toward life?

Does a sense of humor shine through?

What makes this author’s voice unique?

**Style**

Is the writing didactic or breezy? Wordy or clear? Poetic or simple? Action and dialogue or lots of exposition? Do you prefer long passages or lots of white space and short chapters?

**Theme**

Can you identify a central theme? (i.e. sibling relationships, coming of age, father/son)

How does the theme relate to the story?

Does the theme have symbolic references?

***Genre Specific Topics***

 **Mystery:** Did you suspect the killer early in the story or were you guessing until the end? Was the killer’s motive plausible? Would you want to read more about this sleuth and his world? What makes this series unique and interesting?

**Suspense:** Were the characters realistic, or did they put themselves in jeopardy unnecessarily? Was the villain evil enough for a sense of dread to pervade the story? Were the stakes high enough? And was the resolution convincingly satisfying?

**Romance:** What’s the heat level of this book? Did the relationship develop in a believable manner, or did the love scenes seem gratuitous? Did you fall in love with the hero/heroine? Did the story contain an archetype that appealed to you (i.e. marriage of convenience, fish out of water, rags to riches)? Is it considered a classic romance with a happy ending?

**Sci Fi/Fantasy:** What kind of world did the author create? Is it believable? Is there enough detail to make you feel you’re there? What is at stake in the story? What does the hero risk losing if he fails in his mission? Would you want to revisit this universe?