

## **FSLN Book Club Guide**

Congratulations on joining an FSLN Book Club! To make the most of your time with this group, please review the tips and guidance below. Consider this a starting point, as each group will develop its own agenda and group agreements.

### **How does the Wallace Center support Book Clubs?**

- Recruiting facilitators and members
- Providing support, as needed to Book Club facilitators
- Providing resources including a sample agenda, guidelines, and the FSLN discussion group platform
- Provide a Zoom call-in link and meeting invite for initial Book Club meeting, subsequent meetings organized by the group

### **We've gathered some best practices and suggested resources from different organizations on Book Clubs and have included them below to help get you started:**

#### **Sample Group Agreements**

- **We maintain the confidentiality of all conversations that take place during book club conversations:** This means we don't share any information, names, or details shared in this circle without the consent of those who shared. This is absolute and includes not sharing with colleagues, friends, partners, etc.
- **We share from our own experience:** We use "I" statements and strive to ask questions and relate experience rather than offering unsolicited advice.
- **We commit to collective liberation:** We recognize that we live in an economy and a society predicated on intersecting systems of oppression. We strive to maintain self-awareness about the space to which we feel entitled and a shared culture of accountability and openness to uncomfortable conversations around power and privilege.
- **We commit to being honest about our capacity:** If, over the course of this book club, it becomes clear that I can't participate fully, I agree to formally bow out, rather than just disappearing.
- **Members who haven't read the book:** Come anyway. Not everyone can finish every book, but non-readers may still have valuable insights.
- **Disagreements about the book:** Be gracious! There is never any one way to experience or interpret a book. In fact, differing opinions make the best discussions.
- **Dominating personalities:** Never easy. "Let's hear from some others" is one approach. If the person continues to dominate, a friendly conversation (never e-mail) might work.
- **Listening**—Focus on being an effective listener, not just someone who has all the answers. Using listening skills has helped us to see we each have a lot of answers within us.

- **Trust**—We give ourselves time to get to know one another and to develop a comfort with the group.

Source: *New Economy Coalition* and <https://www.litlovers.com>

**Options for facilitation:**

- Rotate discussion leaders each meeting—maybe it's the person who selects the book or the one who hosts the meeting. If rotating, decide on the next meeting's facilitator before adjourning.
- Appoint a long-term leader: some clubs have a member who enjoys leading all the discussions and has a real gift for doing so. A gifted leader may offer to lead a series of books or a fall/spring 'semester' of book club.
- Invite an outside expert (English teacher, librarian, author) to serve as a resource to the discussion.

Adapted from: <https://www.litlovers.com>

*Real Food Media's Real Food Reads Book Club* also offers ideas and resources: <https://smallplanetinstitutereal.app.box.com/v/RealFoodReadsBookClubGuide>

**Sample Agenda/Facilitation Plan:**

**Suggested duration: 1 hour**

**\*For the first meeting, consider beginning with a round of introductions, then group agreements.**

**Ground Rules/ Group Agreements.** (5 mins) Review your groups ground rules or group agreements at the start of each meeting. See sample group agreements above or develop your own with the group during your first meeting.

**Opening-** (10 mins) something to give everyone the chance to talk, learn something about each other and get engaged. Some options:

- What are you most excited about in your work right now?
- One-word check in
- What do you see outside your window?
- How do you take your coffee/tea?

**Topic of the day:** (35 mins)

- Shift conversation to the topic of the day- some questions consider:
  - What stuck out for you?
  - How did the book make you feel?
  - What themes did you notice in the book?
  - What is your impression of the author?
  - How did you feel about how the story was told?
  - What was challenging about this book?

- What was affirming about this book?
- How does this book compare to other books you've read?
- How did this book change you?
- How do you see your work relating to this book?
- Was there anything you could apply personally or professionally?
- Etc etc!

**Closing:** (10 mins)

- Ask for any final thoughts
- Conclude with 1-word checkout or ask folks to share appreciations/takeaways.
- **Plan for your next discussion: confirm next date and book, ask for volunteer to facilitate the next club**