



Questions to get your group talking

1. Describe some of the events and statements that Ta-Nehisi Coates writes about in *Between the World and Me* that you felt a connection with or related to while reading.
2. What are some of the problems that Coates highlights in *Between the World and Me*? What are some of the positive moments that Coates writes about?
3. What are some of the words that Coates returns to throughout *Between the World and Me*? Do you think that these words help to effectively express Coates' ideas? What about the poems and quotes that Coates cites? Did they assist your understanding of or connection with Coates' ideas throughout the book?
4. Jordan Michael Smith of the *New York Observer* describes Ta-Nehisi Coates as “the single best writer on the subject of race in the United States.” How do you define race? How does your personal definition inform your reading of this book and your place in the community? What role does race play in Oak Park?
5. How does Coates present Chicago in *Between the World and Me*? How does this book change your perspective regarding some of the events in the United States during the past few years, especially in Ferguson, Baltimore, and Chicago?
6. Do you think any of the ideas that Coates raises in *Between the World and Me* relate to your experiences or observations in Oak Park?
7. Geographically, culturally, and economically, Coates describes people existing between two worlds. Do we see any existence of this concept in Oak Park?
8. How would you describe Coates' tone in *Between the World and Me*? Do you think that Coates' tone helps to effectively convey his ideas in the book?

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Questions continued

9. In *Between the World and Me*, how do infrastructures and systems reinforce racism in America? Do you see these systems in Oak Park as well or does Oak Park have better systems than the ones that Coates presents in this book?
10. In *Between the World and Me*, what are some of the most influential moments in Coates' life?
11. Do you think Coates encourages integration, especially given his definition of race? How important is integration to Oak Park?
12. In *Between the World and Me*, were you able to relate to Coates' description of his focus on survival?
13. How did Coates' son change his life? What do you think is Coates' main purpose in writing to his son?
14. In *Between the World and Me*, Coates writes that "all [his] life, [he'd] heard people tell their black boys and black girls to 'be twice as good'" (p. 90). Coates also tells his son that "you are a black boy, and you must be responsible for your body in a way that other boys cannot know" (p. 71). Coates continues that "indeed, [his son] must be responsible for the worst actions of other black bodies, which, somehow, will always be assigned to [him]" (p. 71). How do you feel about these statements? Do you ever feel that you are judged because of your representation of a group?
15. What does the title, *Between the World and Me*, mean? How does Coates revisit it throughout the book?
16. In *Between the World and Me*, Coates writes that "'good intention' is a hall pass through history, a sleeping pill that ensures the Dream" (p. 33). While reading this book, were you able to connect with Coates' feelings of hopelessness and futility?
17. Coates writes about the importance of libraries in his life in *Between the World and Me*. How do you see public libraries, like the Oak Park Public Library, changing your life and perspective? What do you think the role of public libraries should be in communities, especially regarding addressing issues of race in communities?
18. What do you think of Coates' representation of history in *Between the World and Me*? Do you agree that the achievements of African-Americans and Africans in general have been underrepresented in history? Describe some examples of this underrepresentation.
19. Did *Between the World and Me* change your perspective of the concept of race? Did Coates challenge your views regarding the experience of African-American men in the United States?
20. What do you think is the most important idea that we should take away from reading *Between the World and Me*?