

Book Club Boot Camp

Julie's Book Club Basic Rules

1. Ideal membership is 8-12 members.
2. Meetings should be scheduled every 4-6 weeks at a regular time to ensure consistency of participation.
3. Book selection process should be agreed upon and maintained by all members. Level of literature to be read is an important choice and may change over time but needs to be addressed in order to keep members satisfied.
4. Choice of whether or not to use a professional facilitator should be agreed upon by all members. If there is to be none, group must decide how discussions will be led on a monthly basis.
5. One person should be in charge of keeping the schedule and sending out an email after every meeting updating the next book, location and news. One week before each meeting the host should send out an email requesting an RSVP. An accurate email list should be maintained and distributed to all members for these purposes.
6. Always have a clear boundary between social time and discussion time. Have a rule not to start any conversation about the book while having a meal or snack and catching up with members. Sit down to the meeting, start with business then move into discussion for the time allotted. This will serve to keep book club on track and conversation lively. Gently remind members to return to the book if they veer off track with personal stories during book club time.

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5 Book Discussion Suggestions

1. Always select a book that has been read by at least one member of a book group or a professional book group leader. The worst book club meetings are when a book, which may be an enjoyable read, falls flat in discussion because it does not have enough depth for a viable discussion.
2. Book Club is an opportunity to read books that you would not normally read, books outside of your comfort zone. Groups should make an effort to select various genres, ethnic literature, classics and backlist works by well-known authors. Remember every member will not love every book but diversity adds to the discussion and a quality book, even if not liked, will be appreciated after the book group.
3. Never allow the members or the leader of the group to start a meeting by saying whether they liked or did not like the book. This sets the tone and is not a relevant comment until after the book has been thoroughly discussed and one can make an educated statement about the writing and your response to it. Many readers change their opinion after a spirited book club meeting.
4. Do not have one format for discussing all books. Each book has a different element that stands out whether it is language, character, structure, plot or theme. As you are reading the book, concentrate on what is most noticeable to you and use that as a starting point for the discussion of that particular book.
5. The goal of a successful book club is to develop a canon of literature that you have read and discussed over a period of time. In order to build on your knowledge, it is important to contextualize what you read by comparing and contrasting it to what you have already discussed. Many books may also inspire you to go back and read a classic as a pairing with a contemporary novel.

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