

Nothing More Dangerous

Book Club Questions

1. In the classic structure of the hero's journey, the starting point of the story is established by creating a story world (the status quo) which is where the journey will begin. What is Boady Sanden like at the beginning of the novel? How does he see his world?
2. The protagonist's journey then begins with what is called the inciting incident—the thing that injects a change into the protagonist's world and sends them on their journey. Here, the Dixon house, which has sat empty for years, has been sold to a black family. How does that inject a change in Boady's world?
3. What are Boady's beliefs regarding race as they are presented in Chapter five? Boady gives a few examples of overt racism (conscious racism) as he defends his belief that he is not prejudiced against blacks. What is the difference between the conscious racism of the Jim Crow era versus Boady's notions of folks who are black? Why might Boady believe that he is not prejudiced?
4. In chapter 25, Hoke points out that there is an instinct to divide people into us and them that has been passed down from our ancestors. What are your thoughts on Hoke's statements on that topic? How does that instinct divide people along lines of: race, religion, sex, country of origin, etc.? How does the impulse to divide people into us and them lead to stereotyping among these groups?
5. Discuss the meaning of the Martin Luther King Jr. quote. Why did the author use that quote to find the title for the book. How does that title express the major theme of the novel?
6. How has Boady changed from the beginning of the novel up to the dance at the parish picnic?
7. In chapter 32, as Boady is being assaulted by Jarvis, he considers the insults that Jarvis makes. How does his response to Jarvis mark a big step forward in his journey to understand sub conscious prejudices?
8. How does the author give the reader Hoke's backstory? What is Hoke's journey in this novel? Why is acting as a surrogate father for Boady important for that journey? What is Hoke's journey in this novel?
9. Boady's mother, Emma, also had a journey in this novel. In chapter 48, Emma confronts Mariam Fisk when Mariam insults Hoke. She also sings Amazing Grace

at the funeral. How do these events mark a change in her life? What was her journey in this novel? How do the lyrics of the song at the end of the book mirror the change that Boady went through?