



Vermont Reads

The Hate U Give

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



This discussion guide was written by Shanetia P. Clark, Associate Professor of Literacy, Salisbury University. Extension activities adopted from Molly Dunlea, high school teacher in Chicago, IL. It uses specific page references.

1. As Starr and Khalil listen to Tupac, Khalil explains what Tupac said “Thug Life” meant. Discuss the meaning of the term “Thug Life” as an acronym and why the author might have chosen part of this as the title of the book. In what ways do you see this in society today? (Chapter 1, p. 17)
2. Chapter 2 begins with Starr flashing back to two talks her parents had with her when she was young. One was about sex (“the usual birds and bees”). The second was about what precautions to take when encountering a police officer (Chapter 2, p. 20). Have you had a similar conversation about what to do when stopped by the police? Reflect upon or imagine this conversation.
3. Thomas frequently uses motifs of silence and voice throughout the book. Find instances in the book where silence or voice and speech are noted, and talk about the author’s possible intentions for emphasizing these motifs.
4. At the police station after Starr details the events leading up to the shooting, the detective shifts her focus to Khalil’s past. Why do you think the detective did this? Discuss Starr’s reaction to this “bait” (Chapter 6, pp. 102–103). Discuss the way that Khalil is portrayed by the media. How does Starr work to counteract this media portrayal?
5. How do you think Starr would define family? What about Seven, DeVante, Kenya, and Khalil? Do you have to be related by blood to consider a person family? How do you define family?
6. Once news of Khalil’s shooting spreads across the neighborhood, unrest arises: “Sirens wail outside. The news shows three patrol cars that have been set ablaze at the police precinct . . . A gas station near the freeway gets looted . . . My neighborhood is a war zone” (Chapter 9, pp. 138–139). Respond to this development and describe some parallels to current events.
7. Chris and Starr have a breakthrough in their relationship—Starr admits to him that she was in the car with Khalil and shares the memories of Natasha’s murder (Chapter 17, pp. 298–301). Discuss why Starr’s admission and releasing of this burden to Chris is significant.

Explore the practice of “code switching” and discuss how you might code switch in different circumstances in your own life.

8. How and why does the neighborhood react to the grand jury’s decision (Chapter 23)? How does Starr use her voice as a weapon, and why does she feel that it is vital that she does? Refer back to “Thug Life” and discuss how the acronym resonates in this chapter.
9. Maverick’s rose garden is a recurring symbol throughout the course of the novel. Discuss the symbolism of the rose garden and how it contributes to the overall theme.
10. Starr pledges to “never be quiet” (Chapter 26, p. 444). After reading this book, how can you use your voice to promote and advance social justice? Reflect on how you and your community discuss and address inequality

Anti-Defamation League Book of the Month – *The Hate U Give* (<https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/documents/book-of-the-month-the-hate-u-give.pdf>)

Additional Ideas for a Dynamic Discussion

- Use a facilitator, preferably someone who loves literature, has experience leading discussions, and has taken the time to read and research the book carefully. They should be prepared with a list of stimulating questions (the above list is a good start) and should try to include everyone in the conversation.
- Make every attempt to seat people in a circle. If the group is too large for this configuration, ask people to speak loudly and clearly so that everyone can hear, or, as appropriate, ask them to stand and face the group when talking.
- Don’t forget the introductions! Be creative — in addition to stating their names, people might briefly share their general impressions of the book, their reason for attending, or something about the book for discussion.
- Discussion facilitators should end the discussion with some kind of “closer.” One example is asking everyone (or, if the group is large, volunteers) to share a final thought about the book or the experience they’ve just had discussing it. Or ask volunteers to read their favorite sentence or paragraph from the book.
- Serve refreshments!