Questions for Discussing Literature

By Henrika Floren
QUESTIONS FOR FICTION

These questions can be used for any novel. They are also helpful if you want to make your own discussion questions for a given text.
Setting

“the time, place, and conditions in which the action of a book, movie, etc., takes place
- The movie changes the play's setting from the late 18th century to the year 2000.
- She uses modern-day Los Angeles as the setting for her book.”
from http://www.learnersdictionary.com/search/setting

* What was special about the setting of the book?
* How did it make the story better (or worse)?
Themes

“the main subject that is being discussed or described in a piece of writing, a movie, etc.

- The quest for power is the underlying theme of the film.
  - A constant theme in his novels is religion.
- The playwright skillfully brings together various themes.
  - The album focuses on themes of love and loss.
  - Adventures are popular themes in children’s books.”

from http://www.learnersdictionary.com/search/theme

✶ What themes can you find in the novel?

✶ What message do you think the author is trying to get across to the reader?
Characters

"a person who appears in a story, book, play, movie, or television show

▪ The film's main characters are a woman in her late 30s and her elderly neighbor.
  ▪ She plays the film's lead/main/central character.
  ▪ a fictional character [=a character in a work of fiction]
  ▪ a popular cartoon character
  ▪ the title character of the book Tom Sawyer [=the character named Tom Sawyer]
  from http://www.learnersdictionary.com/search/character

* Are the characters real and believable?
* Can you relate to their problems?
* Do they remind you of yourself or of somebody you know?
Change & Development

- How do characters change and develop in the story?
- If so, what causes the characters to change or to grow and develop?
World View

• How does the story reveal the author’s world view? (How s/he looks upon the world)
Did parts of the book make you feel uneasy, moved, surprised...?

If so, why?

Did you learn something from this?
QUESTIONS FOR NON-FICTION

Many non-fiction books are also excellent to discuss; Biographies, memoirs, essays, historical accounts. Topics can cover anything from religion to science.

The following questions should help you with some ideas on what to discuss.

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Facts

🌟 Did you find anything surprising about the facts in the book?

🌟 If so, what?
Opinions

"a belief, judgment, or way of thinking about something : what someone thinks about a particular thing ...

- Why ask (for) my opinion if you have already decided?
- I value your opinion. [=I respect the way you think about things]
- We asked for their opinions about/on the new stadium”
from http://www.learnersdictionary.com/search/opinion

Has the book changed your opinion about a person or a topic?

If so how?
Was the information in the book presented in an interesting way?

How does the author achieve this (or not)?
Debate

If the text is debating something, are all sides of the issue taken into consideration?

Is the author biased?
adapted from


with definitions from

http://www.learnersdictionary.com

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