

WE CAME HERE TO SHINE

Book Club Discussion Guide

I hope these questions enhance your book club's discussion of WE CAME HERE TO SHINE. Please note that the questions below will give away elements of the plot, so it's best to read the book before reviewing the guide. Tag me on social media with photos of your book club holding up their copies of WE CAME HERE TO SHINE and I'll share! Thank you.

1. The World's Fair plays the role of another character in the novel. Have you ever attended a World's Fair yourself or know someone who has? If you haven't attended one, based upon the description in the novel, do you think it's something you would have wanted to go to? Why or why not? And how, if at all, did the fair's depiction in the novel teach you about, or change your impression of, this important event?
2. The New York World's Fair of 1939 took place as the Great Depression was winding down and as World War II was beginning. What do you know about the political and cultural landscapes of the time that inform the storylines of the characters and the timing of the World's Fair in general?
3. If you could time travel back to 1939, which exhibits or buildings would you visit? What souvenirs would you buy?
4. One of the opening quotes is by Eleanor Roosevelt: "You must do the thing you think you cannot do." What does that quote mean to you?
5. Are you more of a Max or a Vivi, or neither? Why? How did your impressions of each character evolve while reading the book?
6. What job would you have pursued at the fair during the summer of 1939? Would you have wanted to work for Today at the Fair, swim in the Aquacade, work at one of the exhibit buildings, or something else entirely?
7. Were you surprised to learn that Sofia was Vivi's daughter? What else surprised you while reading the novel?
8. Do you blame Vivi for leaving her newborn daughter in the care Maria, even though Vivi knew Frank was a dangerous man? Or do you think Vivi did what she had to do because Maria pressured her to leave?
9. How do you think Max handled the situation she faced in not receiving comparable work assignments to her co-worker Charlie? How would you have handled her plight?
10. While reading the novel, did you hope Vivi would end up with her Los Angeles boyfriend Gabe or the Aquacade diver Dean? Or did you think she wasn't well-suited for either?
11. Did you think Max and James were a good match? How did you feel about their relationship when the novel ended?
12. If you were asked to create a time capsule of the present day, what items would you recommend be included to represent our society?
13. What can we learn from Max's and Vivi's experiences about the challenges women faced professionally and personally in the late 1930s?
14. Have you read any of Susie Orman Schnall's other novels. How would you compare this one to those?
15. If you were making a movie of this novel, who would you cast?
16. Did you take away any message from the story?

17. Reread the last paragraph of the acknowledgments. Why do you think this sentiment is so important to the author? Is it something that you find inspiring or interesting or that you identify with in any way? Why or why not?

Enhance your Book Club

Please take photos and post on social media. Tag me so I can see them and share.

- If your book club is near New York City, go as a group to the grounds of the fair at Flushing Meadows-Corona Park to see the site of the World's Fair. Better yet, take one of the many tours offered of the grounds. And be sure to visit the Queens Museum to see their extensive World's Fair collection.
- Ask each book club member to choose a country that had a presence in the Government Zone. At the meeting, have each member give a short presentation about what was included in that country's exhibit. All of the information can be found at 1939nyworldsfair.com.
- Wear late-1930s fashions to the book club meeting and play music from the era.
- Screen World's Fair videos. Suggestions include *The Middletons at the Fair*, scenes from the *Aquacade*, and the seventeen amateur films by Philip Medicus that show a tremendous amount of the fair and its attendees.
- Look at the menu from the Famous Chicken Inn, the restaurant Max and Charlie visit. Ask everyone in the book club to cook her own variation of an item from the menu so you can enjoy a meal that commemorates a crowd favorite from the fair.