

# discussion questions for west with giraffes

**Discussion questions for West With Giraffes** serve as a vital tool for engaging readers in a deeper understanding of the novel's themes, characters, and broader implications. In this article, we will explore key discussion questions that can spark meaningful conversations about the book. These questions will cover various aspects of the narrative, including character development, historical context, and thematic elements, providing a comprehensive framework for discussion.

## Overview of "West With Giraffes"

"West With Giraffes" is a historical fiction novel by Lynda Rutledge that follows the journey of two giraffes being transported across the United States in the early 1930s. Set against the backdrop of the Great Depression, the story intertwines the lives of the animals with those of the humans who care for them. The narrative explores themes of resilience, compassion, and the intersection of human and animal lives.

## Key Themes and Concepts

Before delving into specific discussion questions, it's essential to outline some of the central themes present in the novel:

- **Human-Animal Connection:** The bond between humans and animals is a focal point in the story, highlighting empathy and compassion.
- **The Impact of Historical Events:** The Great Depression serves as a backdrop, influencing the characters' decisions and experiences.
- **Adventure and Journey:** The physical journey of transporting the giraffes symbolizes personal growth and the quest for purpose.
- **Social Issues:** The novel touches on themes of racism, class struggles, and the treatment of animals.

## Discussion Questions

Here are some thought-provoking questions designed to facilitate rich discussions about "West With Giraffes."

## Character Development

1. How do the main characters, including the giraffes, evolve throughout the novel?
  - Consider the transformation of the protagonist, Woody, and how his experiences shape his views on life and responsibility.
2. What role do secondary characters play in the development of Woody's character?
  - Discuss the influence of characters like Miss Vick and their impact on Woody's journey.
3. In what ways does the author use the giraffes as a mirror to reflect human emotions and struggles?
  - Explore the connection between the giraffes' plight and the human characters' challenges.

## Thematic Exploration

4. How does the theme of resilience manifest in the novel?
  - Identify specific moments where characters demonstrate resilience in the face of adversity.
5. What does the novel suggest about the relationship between humans and animals?
  - Discuss the ethical implications presented in the story regarding the treatment of animals.
6. In what ways does Lynda Rutledge use humor to address serious topics?
  - Analyze how moments of levity contribute to the overall message of the book.

## Historical Context

7. How does the Great Depression influence the characters' decisions and outlooks?
  - Examine how the socio-economic climate of the 1930s shapes the interactions and motivations of the characters.
8. What historical events or cultural attitudes of the time are reflected in the novel?
  - Discuss elements such as racism and the treatment of marginalized groups during this era.
9. How does the novel portray the role of zoos and animal transport during this period?
  - Investigate the depiction of zoos and the ethics surrounding animal captivity.

## Symbolism and Imagery

10. What symbolic meanings can be derived from the giraffes themselves?
  - Explore how the giraffes represent innocence, freedom, or the fragility of life.
11. How does the journey across the country serve as a metaphor in the novel?
  - Discuss the significance of the road trip in relation to personal growth and self-discovery.

12. What role does nature play in the story, and how does it affect the characters?
- Analyze the interactions with the environment and their significance to the narrative.

## **Personal Reflections and Connections**

13. Which character did you relate to the most, and why?
- Encourage readers to reflect on their personal connections to the characters.
14. What lessons can be drawn from Woody's journey, both literal and metaphorical?
- Discuss the broader life lessons that emerge from the narrative.
15. How does the novel challenge or reinforce your views on animal rights and conservation?
- Encourage critical thinking about the treatment of animals in society today.

## **Conclusion**

Discussion questions for "West With Giraffes" not only enhance the reading experience but also encourage readers to think critically about the themes and issues presented in the novel. By exploring character development, historical context, and personal reflections, readers can gain a deeper appreciation for Lynda Rutledge's storytelling and the complex interplay between humans and animals.

Engaging with these discussion questions can lead to enriching conversations, making the reading of "West With Giraffes" a more profound and insightful journey. Whether in a book club setting or a classroom discussion, these questions provide a valuable framework for understanding and appreciating the intricacies of the novel.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What themes of resilience and survival are explored in 'West with Giraffes'?**

The novel delves into themes of resilience through the characters' struggles against adversity, showcasing how they adapt and survive in the face of challenges, both in the journey of the giraffes and their own personal battles.

### **How does the historical context of the Great Depression influence the narrative in 'West with Giraffes'?**

The backdrop of the Great Depression shapes the characters' motivations and decisions, highlighting the economic hardships and social issues of the time, which adds depth to their journey and interactions with giraffes.

## **In what ways do the characters' relationships evolve throughout the story?**

As the characters face various trials during their journey, their relationships deepen, showcasing themes of friendship, loyalty, and understanding, ultimately leading to personal growth and transformation.

## **What role do the giraffes play in the development of the story's main characters?**

The giraffes serve as a catalyst for change, symbolizing hope and innocence, while also driving the main characters to confront their own fears and aspirations, thus influencing their development throughout the journey.

## **How does the author use imagery and symbolism in 'West with Giraffes'?**

The author employs vivid imagery and symbolism to evoke emotions and convey deeper meanings, with the giraffes representing freedom and the wildness of nature, contrasting with the constraints of society experienced by the characters.

## **What impact does the setting have on the overall narrative of 'West with Giraffes'?**

The setting, primarily the American landscape during the 1930s, plays a crucial role in shaping the story, influencing the characters' experiences and interactions, and reflecting the broader societal issues of that era.

## **How does 'West with Giraffes' address the theme of human-animal connections?**

The novel explores the bond between humans and animals, emphasizing empathy and compassion, as the characters' experiences with the giraffes highlight the importance of understanding and protecting wildlife and nature.

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