

In Reading Groups

Book Discussion Guide from the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

Adapted from HarperCollins Publishing



The Hate U Give

by Angie Thomas

The uneasy balance of Starr Carter's life is shattered when Starr witnesses the fatal shooting of her childhood best friend at the hands of a police officer. As the only person alive who knows what really went down that night, what Starr does—or does not—say could upend her community and endanger her life.

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).
5. 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. 136–139). Respond to this development and describe some parallels to current events.
6. How do you think Starr would define family? What about Seven? How do you define it?
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. 298–302). 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. 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.

NEXT MONTH



The Summer that Melted Everything

by Tiffany McDaniel

This debut novel centers on Fielding Bliss in the summer of 1984, the year a heat wave scorched Breathed, Ohio, and Fielding became friends with the devil.