

FAQ's

1/. Is this a book group?

Not exactly. It's not a fixed, stable group of PEOPLE who gather to read books. It's looser, more a la carte. I announce a book and the dates/time we will convene to discuss. If that selection appeals to you, you sign up for a day of the week and that is your group. . . . for that book only. No pressure or expectation to read every book.

2/. How do books get selected?

Arbitrarily by me. My criteria is that it be generally considered a 'classic' and that I can get to some level of comfort in leading the discussions. I am always soliciting suggestions from participants but the final decision rests with me.

Sometimes we have become intrigued and entranced by an author and gone on to read multiple works. We've read all Jane Austen novels and several by Edith Wharton and E.M. Forster. We've read both War and Peace and Anna Karenina. We've read one Willa Cather and will certainly read more.

3/. Why do we meet weekly?

Meeting weekly creates a certain cadence and commitment that we find to be delightfully 'sticky'. We meet only for one hour and it's all on Zoom so participants find it much less onerous than if we were gathering somewhere in person. We don't need to check the weather. We can wear pajamas. We can be active listeners vs. speakers on weeks when we just feel like being quiet.

4/. How scholarly are the discussions? Will I be intimidated?

I'm smiling as I write this. I characterize our participants as serious and enthusiastic readers who enjoy the motivation of wondering what the group will find to discuss as they prepare for the week's reading. We like to dig into characters, plot, themes, setting but we are steadfastly generous with each other. I try to act as facilitator, not professor. We love to hear points of view different from our own and explore tributaries we may not have found individually. There is ALWAYS laughter. If we aren't laughing at some point, something is wrong and I will fix it.

5/. Can I switch groups on any given week if I have a conflict?

Sure. Happens all the time.

6/. Is outside reading expected?

Not at all. But many participants do find interesting links to share. For example, participants found maps that aided in our understanding of the battle scenes in War and Peace. When we read Pride and Prejudice, it was helpful to hear about the legal process of entailing estates which had such an impact on the Bennet family. We have also found contemporaneous reviews of the works we read which adds a fascinating dimension to our discussions.

7/. How big are the groups?

I'll do a group with a minimum of 6 participants. I may cut off group size at around 14 and ask late-comers to agree to be 'auditors'. . . they are more than welcome to read along with us and join the zoom sessions but keep video and audio turned off.

8/. Will I feel pressure to talk?

Absolutely not. That's a promise. We welcome active listeners. I never put anyone 'on the spot'.

9/. Why are we still meeting on Zoom? Will we ever transition to in-person meetings?

I can't imagine leaving Zoom! While this group was conceived as a pandemic offering for stuck-in-the-house Islanders, our scope has grown. Islanders still form the core of our groups but we have warmly welcomed summer residents, friends of Islanders, daughters, sisters, husbands, and also one very special Austen fan who found us via a Google alert! We are now both bi-coastal and global. We are now all very comfortable on Zoom - no need to shout 'unmute' the way we need to in 2020

