

DIY DISCUSSION GUIDE

MAKE YOUR ONE BOOK, ONE COMMUNITY DISCUSSION A BIG SUCCESS

First time leading a book discussion? Have you led book discussions but are looking for some ideas to breathe new life into your group? We have some tips to help make your discussion of *Room* by Emma Donoghue a success with this Do It Yourself Discussion Guide.

- **Make it fun.** Meet somewhere that's comfortable for everyone, whether that's over Zoom or a socially distant outdoor gathering. Keep it casual by enjoying food and drinks, even while you discuss virtually.
- **Help newcomers feel comfortable and welcome.** Be sure everyone knows each other's name, and spend a few minutes getting to know one another before discussing the book.
- **Go off-script.** Feel free to skip questions or ask them in a different order based on the members of your group and how you think they'll participate. If your group was really interested in one aspect of the book, feel free to focus on that. Ask your own questions to dive deeper and let other members ask questions, too.
- **Pause.** Be sure to give members time to think and answer before you jump in with your own answer to every question.
- **Be respectful of different opinions, responses and reactions to the book.** Diverse viewpoints make the discussion more interesting and rich.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. On a scale of 1-4 stars, how many stars would you give *Room* and why?
2. What word or phrase do you think best describes the book? Feel free to expand.
3. What are the pros and cons of telling this story from Jack's point of view? How would it have been different if it had been told from Ma's?
4. Ma does the best she can to parent Jack considering the circumstances. What would you do differently?
5. If you have seen the movie version of this book, how do the two compare? If you haven't seen the movie, has the book caused you to want to seek it out?
6. *Room* deals with despicable acts, yet readers flocked to it. Why do stories of confinement hold such a fascination to readers, of both fiction and nonfiction? (from Amnesty International Book Club)
7. Jack and Ma's escape should be a happy occasion, yet the world beyond *Room* is, in many ways, a prison of its own. In what ways does the outside world mirror that of *Room*? (from Amnesty International Book Club)
8. What are some of the ways in which Jack's development has been stunted by growing up in *Room*? How has he benefited? (from LitLovers)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (CONT.)

9. Describe the dynamic between Old Nick and Ma. Why does the author choose not to tell us Old Nick's story? (from LitLovers)
10. If Ma had never given birth to Jack, what would her situation in *Room* be like? (from LitLovers)
11. Have you read other books by Emma Donoghue? If so, which ones? Would you read any of her other titles after reading *Room*?
12. What will you remember about *Room*? How did the book affect you as a reader?

READ ON

Emma Donoghue's other titles:

- *The Pull of the Stars* (2020)
- *Akin* (2019)
- *The Wonder* (2016)
- *Frog Music* (2014)
- *Astray* (2012), short stories
- *Inseparable: Desire Between Women in Literature* (2010), nonfiction
- *The Sealed Letter* (2008)
- *Landing* (2007)
- *Touchy Subjects* (2007), short stories
- *Life Mask* (2004)
- *Slammerkin* (2000)
- *Hood* (1995)
- *Stir-fry* (1994)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Emma Donoghue was born in Dublin, Ireland, the youngest of eight children. She is the daughter of Frances (nee Rutledge) and academic and literary critic Denis Donoghue. Other than her tenth year, which she refers to as “eye-opening” while living in New York, Donoghue attended Catholic convent schools throughout her early years.

She earned a first-class honors BA from the University College Dublin in English and French (though she admits to never having mastered spoken French). Donoghue went on to receive her PhD in English from Girton College at Cambridge University. Her thesis was on the concept of friendship between men and women in 18th-century English fiction.

At Cambridge, she met her future life partner Christine Roulston, a Canadian, who is now professor of French and Women’s Studies at the University of Western Ontario. They moved permanently to Canada in 1998, and Donoghue became a Canadian citizen in 2004. She lives in London, Ontario, with Roulston and their two children, Finn and Una.

Donoghue has been able to make a living as a writer since she was 23. Doing so enables her to claim that she’s never had an “honest job” since she was sacked after a summer as a chambermaid. In 1994, at only 25, she published first novel, *Stir Fry*, a contemporary coming of age novel about a young Irish woman discovering her sexuality.

Donoghue is perhaps best known for her 2010 novel, *Room* - its popularity practically made her a household name. *Room* spent months on bestseller lists and won the Irish Book Award; it was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize, the Orange prize, and the (Canadian) Governor General’s Award. In 2015, the novel was adapted to film. Donoghue wrote the screenplay, which earned her a nomination for an Academy Award, Golden Globe and Bafta Award.

From LitLovers.com

A SUMMARY OF ROOM

To five-year-old Jack, Room is the entire world. It is where he was born and grew up; it’s where he lives with his Ma as they learn and read and eat and sleep and play. At night, his Ma shuts him safely in the wardrobe, where he is meant to be asleep when Old Nick visits.

Room is home to Jack, but to Ma, it is the prison where Old Nick has held her captive for seven years. Through determination, ingenuity and fierce motherly love, Ma has created a life for Jack. But she knows it’s not enough... not for her or for him. She devises a bold escape plan, one that relies on her young son’s bravery and a lot of luck. What she does not realize is just how unprepared she is for the plan to actually work.

Told entirely in the language of the energetic, pragmatic five-year-old Jack, *Room* is a celebration of resilience and the limitless bond between parent and child, a brilliantly executed novel about what it means to journey from one world to another.

From LitLovers.com

QUESTIONS?

Visit SchaumburgLibrary.org/one-book to learn more about One Book, One Community, or contact our Fiction staff at (847) 923-3140 if you have questions about leading a book discussion.