

RESTORATION
GLASS

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Study Guide

INTRODUCTION

1. What, if anything, do you find troubling about communication and conflict in our culture today? Do you see or experience any solutions?
2. How does the author's experience with "restoration glass" relate to her perspective on conflict resolution? Do you have a similar metaphor that makes sense in your life?
3. Explore the concept of "third places" and their significance in fostering dialogue and community. How might the rise of social media both contributed to and hindered the creation of these spaces?
4. Discuss the role of hospitality in building bridges across differences. How can hospitality create opportunities for meaningful connection and understanding?

THE NEED FOR PLACE

1. How does place contribute to our sense of identity? For you personally?
2. Explore the challenge of reconciling multiple places in one's identity. Do you have such a challenge? What can we learn from that?
3. The author differentiates between living on a farm and being a farmer, asserting that this distinction is very important to her. Why might that be? How do identity and place overlap? Do you have places in your life in which this is true? Can you think of times when you have conflated place and identity of others?
4. Explore how decorating your home is part of your identity. What do you say with your home and your visible belongings and your décor?

5. Should the design of workspaces and public buildings prioritize beauty? If so, how and why? And if not, does beauty matter? What might be some of the potential benefits and challenges of incorporating beauty into functional environments such as schools, hospitals, and government buildings.

6. There is a tension between our own personal and private space and the desire to build community through hospitality. What does that look like to you?

7. Discuss some of the ways the author's exploration of place connects to broader contemporary discussions about identity, community, and the human relationship with the natural world?

THE NEED FOR STORIES

1. How can personal stories contribute to our sense of self? What about for you and your sense of self?
2. Explore the role family stories play in shaping a child's understanding of their place in the world.
3. According to the Emory University study, how can exposure to family stories impact children as they grow up?
4. Discuss the significance of shared stories, especially in contexts like family gatherings or communal meals. Have you experienced this in your life?

5. Explore how fairytales and myths from different cultures might contribute to a shared understanding of human values.

6. According to Daniel Nayeri, what is the ultimate purpose of the stories in *Arabian Nights*?

7. What concerns does the author express about the potential decline of storytelling in modern society? What are your thoughts?

8. The story of Great-Great-Great-Aunt Eliza illustrates the power of stories to teach us valuable lessons. Think about core memory stories from your life and what lessons you learned more from the existence of the story itself than from the content.

9. How can stories encourage critical thinking in children?

10. The author suggests that modern society may be losing its connection to the power of storytelling. Do you agree or disagree? What are some of your own experiences and observations?

11. Explore the author's argument that storytelling is essential for human survival.

12. How can we work together to cultivate a culture that values storytelling and encourages meaningful listening?

THE NEED FOR CRITICAL THINKING

1. How does the modern understanding of critical thinking differ from its historical roots?
2. What is critical thinking? Discuss what it looks like in practice.
3. Explain the role of self-reflection in the critical thinking process.
4. What are some significant challenges to critical thinking in modern culture?
5. Why is confirmation bias a significant obstacle to critical thinking?
6. What is the purpose of Socratic questioning?

PLACE: HOSPITALITY ALL AROUND

1. Explore some key difference between general definitions of hospitality and the concept of "Biblical hospitality."
2. The author describes her experience with Haitian hospitality and its lasting impact. Do you have any similar memories? What has been their impact?
3. How did your upbringing shape your own understanding and practice of hospitality?
4. What does the author suggest is the "heart of hospitality"? What are the essentials of hospitality to you?
5. How does the word "hospitality" connect to the concept of "stranger"?

PLACE: THE NURTURING OF NATURE

1. Explore the specific benefits that urban green spaces offer. Do you agree?
2. What is *shinrin-yoku*? Are there ways in which you engage in something similar? Why? What is the significance?
3. How did the Glencree Sustainable Peace Network participants describe their experiences in nature as it relates to peacebuilding? Do you agree with their thoughts? Why or why not?
4. Explore the use of the “language of nature” in peacebuilding and conflict.
5. What does the concept of hospitality look like in the context of the natural world? Describe the “hospitality of nature” and how we respond to it.
6. Explore nature as a “transitional space.”

PLACE: COMMUNITY AND SPACE: PLACE

1. How do community, hospitality, and place intersect?
2. Do you see a difference in the value of created or curated community versus community of proximity? Are both important? In what ways?
3. How might community be essential to human wellbeing and thriving? What does that look like to you?
4. Discuss the challenges and benefits of finding community in a modern, increasingly mobile society. How can we maintain community?
5. Do you agree with the assertion that "hospitality creates community; community demands hospitality?" Has that been your experience? Why or why not?
6. How might community help us bridge political and ideological divides?

7. Explore the tension between the romanticized view of community often depicted in popular media and the realities of community life. Consider Hallmark movies: Do they depict real life? Something to which to aspire? Or just fantasy? What about fictional towns such as Star Hollow of *The Gilmore Girls*?

8. The author chose to attend a small church close to her home. Explore her reasons for this and have you ever chosen to do something similar or for similar reasons? How did that play out?

9. How can we create more inclusive and welcoming communities in a world that is often divided along lines of race, class, religion, and political ideology?

STORIES: SHARED FOUNDATIONS AND CULTURAL ROOTEDNESS

1. How do you believe stories contribute to the formation of individual and group identities?
2. Explain and analyze the concept of stories as "communal currency" and explore how individuals and communities utilize this currency to build relationships and navigate social interactions across diverse backgrounds. What kind of value do stories hold?
3. What does the text mean by "listening for stories" as opposed to simply "listening to stories?" Why might this distinction be important? Discuss the role of active listening in the process of understanding and connecting with others through their stories and discuss the potential barriers to effective listening.
4. Do you agree that family stories shared during celebrations can strengthen bonds and transmit values? Can you think of examples from your own life?

5. The organization ROM (Renewing Our Minds) utilize storytelling to promote reconciliation among young people in the former Yugoslavia. Could there be a way to use that in American culture today? Critically examine the ways in which storytelling can be a tool for peacebuilding and reconciliation in post-conflict societies, considering both its potential benefits and limitations.

6. In the context of building new relationships, why might sharing deeper, more personal stories be more effective than just exchanging superficial facts?

7. Discuss how seemingly universal stories like "Beauty and the Beast" can create common ground between people from different cultures. Are you familiar with multiple versions of any fairytales?

8. Why are children's fairytales described as more than just entertainment in the provided excerpts? What kind of lessons do they impart?

STORIES: IMAGINATION AND ART, CREATIVITY AND WONDER

1. According to Vigen Guroian, what is necessary for reason to behold mystery and perceive the true quality of things, just as the sensible mind needs eyes to see?
2. Discuss the interconnectedness of imagination, creativity, and wonder as presented in the text. How do these qualities contribute to a child's development and understanding of the world, including the concept of good and evil?
3. What does Kate DiCamillo suggest happens when people read together and open their hearts to a story?
4. Analyze the argument for the importance of exposing children to stories that include the presence of evil and the possibility of overcoming it. Why does the author suggest that downplaying or hiding these realities can be detrimental? What do children instinctively know about the world that makes this so important?

5. What is one of the crucial "foods" necessary to grow healthy imaginations, especially when they are nurtured and encouraged beyond childhood?

6. What does G.K. Chesterton say about a "first idea" fairy tales do *not* give a child, but what crucial understanding *do* they provide?

7. Explore the various ways in which "heroes" are portrayed in the text, from traditional figures like knights to unexpected ones like the little boy in *The Emperor's New Clothes* and the harmonica-playing Lentil. What common traits or actions define heroism according to the author?

8. Discuss some of the key lessons about bringing beauty into the world illustrated by Barbara Cooney's book *Miss Rumphius*? Examine the role of beauty and the appreciation for the aesthetic in the development of imagination and wonder, as illustrated through the discussion of authors like Barbara Cooney and Robert McCloskey. How can stories cultivate these qualities in children?

9. How did the author's experience at MIT demonstrate the connection between rigorous academic pursuits and imagination and wonder? How can you cultivate that in your own life?

STORIES: MORALS, EMPATHY, VULNERABILITY, AND VIRTUE

1. What risks do we perceive when being vulnerable with an opponent? Explore the relationship between vulnerability and empathy in the context of conflict resolution, drawing on examples from the text. Discuss the challenges and rewards of embracing these qualities when facing opposition.
2. Children may be more inclined towards empathy and reconciliation than adults. Why might that be true—or not? What have you observed in your life?
3. Can we differentiate between "values" and "virtues?" What are some examples of each? Discuss why virtues might be more foundational for reconciliation.
4. How does this distinction between values and virtues impact our understanding of morality and conflict? Discuss whether focusing on virtues offers a more effective path towards reconciliation than focusing on shared values. Is there a role for both?

5. How might focusing on values in conflict resolution sometimes be limiting or even detrimental, particularly in broader cultural or identity-based conflicts? Can you think of examples from your own life (think of the game night example)?

6. How does storytelling effectively teach virtues and foster moral development in individuals, especially children?

7. Examine the concept of moral imagination and why it might be crucial for navigating conflict and fostering understanding between individuals and groups with differing experiences and perspectives.

8. How does reading stories about characters unlike oneself contribute to the development of empathy and understanding? Can you think of examples?

9. Explore the complex relationship between family stories, identity, and empathy. How does this help create a culture of healthy conflict?

CRITICAL THINKING: CRITICAL THINKING AND SOCRATIC QUESTIONING

1. What is the fundamental nature of conflict? Explore the argument that conflict is not inherently negative. Using examples from the text and your own understanding, discuss the potential benefits of engaging in conflict thoughtfully and the dangers of avoiding it altogether.
2. How did the author's high school students initially define conflict, and why did they hold this view? What distinction does the author draw between simply holding opposing viewpoints and engaging in a "bad" conflict? Is there value in conflict when it is approached thoughtfully?
3. What is the significance of "the open table" in Socratic dialogue? Do you tend to approach difficult subjects in that way?
4. Discuss the principles of Socratic dialogue and their relevance to improving the quality of public and interpersonal debates today. How might the "rules of engagement" contribute to more productive conflict resolution?

5. What does the author observe about the nature of contemporary debates on issues of national interest? Do you agree with this observation of the current state of political and social debates? Do you agree with this assessment about posturing and demonization overshadowing genuine dialogue? Discuss your own assessment.

6. Why might refusing to engage with someone whose position you find reprehensible be problematic? How can you resolve this inner tension and conflict?

7. What role does self-critique play in approaching conflict effectively? Elaborate on the importance of understanding one's own beliefs and the reasons behind them before engaging in conflict with others.

8. What is the potential impact of self-reflection and understanding on the process of finding common ground and resolving disagreements?

9. How can confirmation bias and the lack of exposure to diverse viewpoints hinder critical thinking and the ability to engage in healthy conflict? What is confirmation bias and where do you see it in your life?

10. Discuss the relationship between critical thinking and the ability to engage in healthy conflict. What specific elements of critical thinking (e.g., self-critique, recognizing logical fallacies, seeking diverse perspectives) do you see as crucial for navigating disagreements productively?

CRITICAL THINKING: CREATIVITY AND WONDER REDUX

1. According to the text, what is the initial spark for critical thinking, and what famous quote supports this idea?
2. How do stories contribute to our ability to think critically about others? What is a role of imagination in the development of critical thinking skills?
3. What does it mean that to have a "library of knowledge" is essential for critical thinking, and how do stories help build this library?
4. What challenges arise when we encounter literature or individuals whose perspectives or language differ from current cultural norms?
5. How do stories, both real and fictional, develop understanding of the Other and empathy?

6. Explore the challenges and benefits of engaging with literature and perspectives that may be considered culturally insensitive or outdated in the context of fostering critical thinking and empathy.

7. Discuss the ways in which we might begin to overcome our inherent biases and pre-existing categories to engage in more open-minded and critical thinking about the world and the people around us.

8. How can a lack of curiosity hinder critical thinking, as illustrated by the author's experience with members of Congress?

9. Why do our brains automatically sort people and events into pre-existing categories, and what is a potential negative consequence of this process?

10. How can curiosity and creativity be applied to resolving conflicts?

CRITICAL THINKING: FACTS AND FEELINGS

1. What is the problem with viewing critical thinking as solely based on logic and reason?
2. Discuss Aristotle's concept of *phronesis* and its relevance to critical thinking. How is this ancient Greek idea essential for effective critical thinking in the modern world?
3. How do emotions contribute to our ability to think critically and understand others, according to the text? Are emotions integral components of sound reasoning? Why or why not? Do you have positive experiences where your emotions contributed to healthy conflict? What about times when your emotions made conflict worse or more difficult to resolve? What was the difference?
4. Why is it important to acknowledge our emotions when engaging in discussions or debates, especially on sensitive topics? How does ignoring our feelings escalate disagreements and hinder resolution? Do you agree? Have you seen this in your life?

WEAVING YOUR OWN ROPE: SETTING THE STAGE

1. Why does “place matter” beyond just being a backdrop for events?
2. Discuss the relationship between personal identity, place of origin, and the creation of “home.” How does feeling rooted in a place, whether by origin or by choice, affect our interactions with others?
3. Why is it important to “choose community where you are,” even if it isn’t your initial preference? Explore the challenges and rewards of intentionally building community in diverse environments and consider the broader societal impacts.
4. How important do you find it to create welcoming spaces? What do you think are some key elements that contribute to a welcoming environment? What are the practical and philosophical dimensions of creating welcoming spaces, and how can individuals and communities cultivate a culture of hospitality?

5. Why should we be incorporating elements of the natural world into our homes and gathering spaces? What is the potential impact on our individual and collective lives?

6. The author shares examples of inviting broader circles into their lives. Discuss some of the benefits of extending hospitality beyond close friends and family. Can you think of ways to do so?

7. How can inviting people into our personal spaces, like our homes, potentially impact broader societal issues like conflict and distrust? How are you doing this in your life?

8. The author concludes by discussing the importance of being vulnerable and hosting the stranger. Why are these acts significant in building community? Do you find this easy to do? Are some situations harder than others and how can you overcome that?

WEAVING YOUR OWN ROPE: SHARING STORIES AND SHARING OURSELVES

1. How do stories influence the development of friendships? Can you think of ways in which you connected better with someone through stories?
2. Beyond conveying information, what aspects of understanding can stories shape?
3. How do family stories contribute to a child's sense of identity? Think about your own childhood and how your own identity might have been shaped, for good or bad, through family stories. What are some family stories you can share with your children?
4. Discuss the various ways the author argues that storytelling, both personal and fictional, contributes to the formation of individual and collective identity. Can you think of examples from your own life?

5. What are your thoughts on the role of fairy tales in childhood development? Do you consider them important? Should they be exposed to even the dark or frightening fairytales? Why or why not?

6. Explore the idea that reading stories from diverse cultures and perspectives is crucial for understanding the world. How can these stories challenge our assumptions and foster empathy? Can you think of any examples of such stories that you already know?

7. What are the benefits of listening to a child's stories or helping them tell their stories for a child's sense of self and their relationship with others? How can we do this better collectively or in community?

8. Empathy is learned well through stories. What are living books and how do they and the act of immersing ourselves in narratives prepare us to better understand and connect with the real people in our lives?

9. Do you have favorite books that have stuck with you since childhood, impacting your view of the world and of others? What about more recent books?

10. How does this compare to the “stories” we are exposed to through social media? Is that changing our ability to learn via story?

WEAVING YOUR OWN ROPE: THINKING CRITICALLY FOR CONFLICT AND RECONCILIATION

1. The news media personality in this chapter was "haunted" by her dinner companions. What does this illustrate about contemporary social interactions? Have you ever felt that way?
2. Why is it important to be "quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath" in fostering critical thinking and reconciliation? What are the challenges of implementing this advice in contemporary society? How do we do this in discussion, particularly on more contentious topics?
3. Why do people sometimes fail to show their authentic selves in social settings? What are the potential negative consequences of excessively adapting to fit in? Have you found yourself doing this? Is it sometimes okay or even helpful?
4. Why can the phrase "the science shows" sometimes be a misnomer? What does that say about our ability to engage in debate today? How is this impacted by traditional media? Social media? Did this also happen in the past—and why does it so difficult to manage today?

5. Why is self-examination considered a crucial first step before judging the beliefs of others? What potential problems arise from a lack of self-awareness in dialogue? How can we overcome this?

6. The book suggests the primary goal of engaging in dialogue, particularly on divisive issues, should be getting ever closer to truth and not “winning?” Do you agree? How does that look in real life situations? Is it always possible to approach issues this way? What does this say about intellectual humility?

7. Explain the difference between healthy conflict and simply avoiding conflict. Why is avoiding smaller conflicts often detrimental in the long run?

8. How can understanding and labeling one's emotions contribute to more productive discussions during disagreements? How do we do this when we are engaging in a discussion that carries with it hurt and anger? How do we handle the vulnerability of this? How do we ensure our emotions contribute to the dialogue rather than hindering it?

EPILOGUE

1. What are the three interconnected elements this book proposes as a "lifeline out of dysfunctional, ever-spiraling conflict"? How do they work together? What challenges might you or your community face in implementing them?
2. Individual actions, despite their apparent insignificance, are the building blocks of culture. Consider the potential impact of both positive and negative individual actions on broader society. What are some actions you can take every day that could contribute to change? Can you think of historical actions that may have seemed insignificant in the moment but had tremendous impact? What are some historical divisions we have overcome and what might have helped in the healing?
3. Human beings have a dual longing related to "place." Describe both aspects of this longing, as well as exploring concepts of tangible and intangible places. How does this longing for place contribute to our sense of identity and community and how can we use it for building stronger connections? Do you have a sense of place in your life? How much of you has been shaped by your natural family versus your chosen family? Is there tension, good or bad, between those?

