

First Thursday Book Club Discussion Questions**Title: Mountain Time**

November 2018, 2 pm. Leanne Bly hosts.
Leanne Bly leads the discussion.

1. Discuss Lyle, Mitch, Lexa and Mariah's differing relationships to the natural world. How do the characters' childhoods and career choices reflect or shape their connections to the land? How do their attitudes toward nature serve as both barriers and bonds in their relationships with one another?
2. Discuss Doig's use of flashbacks. What effect does he achieve by offering vivid glimpses of his characters' pasts?
3. Mitch wants to safeguard the environment while his father seems bent on exploiting it. Do you view Mitch's environmentalism as filial rebellion, a conscious departure from his father's lifestyle and choices? Or do you think it reflects a generational shift from considering the earth an inexhaustible resource to viewing it as endangered?
4. Does Mariah use her camera as a way of connecting with the world or of keeping it at a distance? What do you think of her pairing of "earthly resemblances" to document the "natural family of forms"? Does she photograph natural and historic sites as a means of preserving them, or simply to achieve an aesthetic end?
5. Mitch decides not to honor his father's dying wish. Do you think he is courageous and his action defensible, or is he wrong? By defying Mitch, is Lexa primarily defending Lyle's decision, or trying to help Mitch let go of his bitterness?
6. Mitch "had the terrifying suspicion that he was beginning to understand extinction, from the inside out." In the course of the book, Mitch is faced with several endings: the dissolution of his marriage, the end of the Coastwatch column, and the end of his father's life. What does the novel suggest about the significance of endings, and of our chances for beginning anew?
7. In pondering the past, Mitch asks: "Do things back somewhere count, or don't they?" Find examples of how Doig explores the past and its effects on the present. Is it wise for Mitch to find Fritz and dig for the reasons behind the old daybook controversy? Is he better off knowing what he finds out?
8. Doig alternates accounts of Lexa's climb out of the mountains for help with Bob Marshall's last hike along the Continental Divide, the "high lonesome" of wild

passages he so loved. What effect does Doig achieve by pairing these characters in this way?

9. What do the cairns, those stone monuments erected in the mountains, symbolize? What do they reflect about our need to alter the natural world, leave reminders of our presence and create things that may outlast us?

10. Bob Marshall is invoked several times in the novel, which ends with a scene of his stream-side reverie. What significance does Marshall's legend lend to the choices and struggles of the four main characters? Why to you think Doig ends the book with the image of Marshall tossing a coin to decide whether or not to build a cairn?

11. Ivan Doig has said that he uses the places he knows to write about that larger country: life. Do you think that the themes of *Mountain Time* could successfully be set in some other place?

12. Who do you think is the strongest character in the novel? Which one is most sympathetic to you? Provide examples that help explain why you think so.