

First Thursday Book Club Discussion Questions

Title: **Born a Crime**

October 2018, 2pm. Elsie Chan hosts. Barb Selis leads the discussion.

1. Discuss the role of religion and spirituality in South Africa, and in Trevor's family.
2. It can be argued that this book is more a story of Patricia, Trevor's mother, than the author himself. How did her independence affect Trevor? How did she teach him to think for himself?
3. Trevor describes himself as a chameleon using language to blend in with different groups. In what ways does this affect how he sees himself?
4. Discuss the role of patriarchy and masculinity in South Africa culture. How does it affect how different people respond to Patricia's abuse from her husband (i.e. Police, Trevor, Patricia)?
5. Did you learn anything new about apartheid?
6. Which story did you like most? Was it comedic or tragic?
7. Trevor opens his memoir with a story about being thrown from a car by his mother. In what way does this story illustrate the overreaching narrative of Trevor's early life?
8. One of the most impressive characteristics that Trevor conveys about his mother is her faith. How did Patricia's faith impact young Trevor? What do you think was the lasting impression of Patricia's faith on Trevor's life?
9. Trevor learned to speak 6 different languages growing up. What impressed you about the ways that Trevor and his mother navigate neighborhoods, cultures and family? How did language make that possible?
10. With all of the challenges Trevor faced growing up, he was gifted by his mother's assurance that he was always wanted and loved by both of his parents. Given that knowledge, how did issues of race play out in his relationships with those closest to him—his mother, father and grandparents and cousins?
11. A notable relationship is between young Trevor and his dog, Fufi. What parallels might be drawn between the way Trevor describes his dog Fufi and he describes himself in his childhood and youth?

12. Trevor shares stories of his many family members, including how the meanings of their names were reflected in their lives. His mother's name, Patricia Nombuyiselo Noah means "she who gives back". His grandfather, Temperance Noah was anything but temperate but his nickname "tat shisha" which translates loosely as "the smokin' hot grandpa" was a perfect fit. What insights does Trevor's story offer about the ways that identity is both assigned and chosen?

13. How does racial segregation affect their daily lives?