

Read Brave 2024

Discussion Questions for *Man o' War* by Cory McCarthy

Start a Conversation in Your Community

Read Brave is about mobilizing community members to have meaningful conversations in their communities and act to create change in Saint Paul. Here are discussion questions created by library staff to help facilitate conversations that help readers connect the book to larger themes:

1. What do you think the title of the book means? What about the cover? How does their meaning evolve throughout the book?
2. Family is talked about a lot in the book. What does family mean to you? How has your family/community shaped your identity?
3. This book is centered on the idea of transitions: In relationships, life stages, personal identities, schools, and self-perception. How have you navigated transitions in your own life?
4. Sections of the book are punctuated with animal biographies. How do they parallel the different stages of River's life? What do you think about the author structuring the book this way?
5. River's identity is built through a number of different roles they play—some chosen, some involuntary, and often in conflict with each other. How do outside influences alter the way you see and express yourself?
6. How does River's body dysphoria and self-policing impact their ability to connect with others: Friends, family, romantic partners, community? Themselves?
7. What are some of River's identities? Specifically, how does their Lebanese heritage, class background, and gender identity intersect and interact?
8. How does River discover their name? Why is using someone's chosen name important? How does River's conversation with their mom (pp. 257-58) illustrate this?
9. Throughout the book, author Cory McCarthy discusses different terms and their definitions. How do you see that knowledge impacting the characters and you as the reader? What are some words that are meaningful to you and what value do you see in shared definitions?
10. Several revelations happen between Indy and River at SeaPlanet. What makes this an important backdrop to their relationship and River's self-discovery?
11. Water is the major theme of the book. Where are the different places you see it in the novel, and how is it a good metaphor?

Have questions? Please reach out to Gao Yang, Community Partnerships & Programs Coordinator, at gao.yang@ci.st.paul.mn.us.

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