

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

*Born a Crime*

by Trevor Noah

BOOK GROUP

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## **AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY**

*Reprinted from publisher.*

Trevor Noah is a South African comedian. He is also known as a writer, producer, political commentator, actor, and television host. He is known for performing in *The Daily Show* on Comedy Central as the host since September 2015. Noah is a polyglot, he speaks English, Xhosa, Zulu, Sotho, Tswana, Tsonga, Afrikaans and some German.

## **BOOK SUMMARY**

The story of a mischievous young boy who grows into a restless young man as he struggles to find himself in a world where he was never supposed to exist. It is also the story of that young man's relationship with his fearless, rebellious, and fervently religious mother—his teammate, a woman determined to save her son from the cycle of poverty, violence, and abuse that would ultimately threaten her own life. The stories collected here are by turns hilarious, dramatic, and deeply affecting. Whether subsisting on caterpillars for dinner during hard times, being thrown from a moving car during an attempted kidnapping, or just trying to survive the life-and-death pitfalls of dating in high school, Trevor illuminates his curious world with an incisive wit and unflinching honesty.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Were you familiar with Trevor Noah before reading this book? Have you seen *The Daily Show*?
2. Trevor's experience growing up seemed similar to the experience of people growing up in our country more like 60 years ago than 30 years ago. Does his youth resonate with you in the ways that racism affected him and in the childhood that he had growing up not very long ago?
3. How does language play a role in Trevor's life and what he observes in human culture?
4. What role does being mixed play in Trevor's life? How do Americans see him?
5. How did Trevor's Mom raise him? What were the impacts of her not putting limitations on him and raising him unlike any example she had of how to raise a child? How would you describe Noah? Patricia?
6. What did you think about Trevor's Mom's discipline?
7. Where did Trevor fit in? Who accepted him? Why did Trevor always feel like an outsider? How did he cope with that?
8. Do you think Noah had a good childhood? How do you think his childhood is unique from others who grew up in South Africa? What types of danger did Noah face in his childhood?
9. What did you think about Trevor's relationship with his biological father, Robert? What was Trevor's father like? How did you view him as a person?
10. How was apartheid similar to American Jim Crow and how was it different?

11. What did you think about the way Trevor's Mom tried to raise him to treat women, and how does that reconcile with her marrying Abel? Why did she marry Abel when she said she wouldn't consider marrying Trevor's father?
12. A lot of what happens in this story is told with humor, even though many things were very dark. Would you consider Trevor an optimist and how did his attitude and views of his own life influence the person he became?
13. Even though he's only 34, did him sharing his story of his life affect your views on things such as regret and taking chances and the choices that you make?
14. How does this book compare to other memoirs/autobiographies you have read? What do you think of Noah's writing style? Do you like his voice?
15. What did you think of how he structured the book?
16. Who do you think Noah had in mind as the audience for his memoir?
17. How can this book contribute to understanding current state of race relations in United States?
18. Are there any quotes from book you'd like to share? Any passage or line that was particularly memorable? Favorite chapter?
19. How did you respond to Trevor's use of humor in telling stories from his youth? How did humor shape his experience growing up?
20. What kind of impact did this book have on you?
21. Did you like the book? What surprised you? Would you recommend it to friends?
22. Do any of his stories / comments challenge your beliefs? Do you think any of his opinions are provocative?
23. Do you think you'll want to see the upcoming film adaptation? What passages from the book will make good scenes?
24. Noah is reportedly working on a second book, picking up where *Born a Crime* ends and about his journey as a comedian in South Africa. Will you be interested in reading it?

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