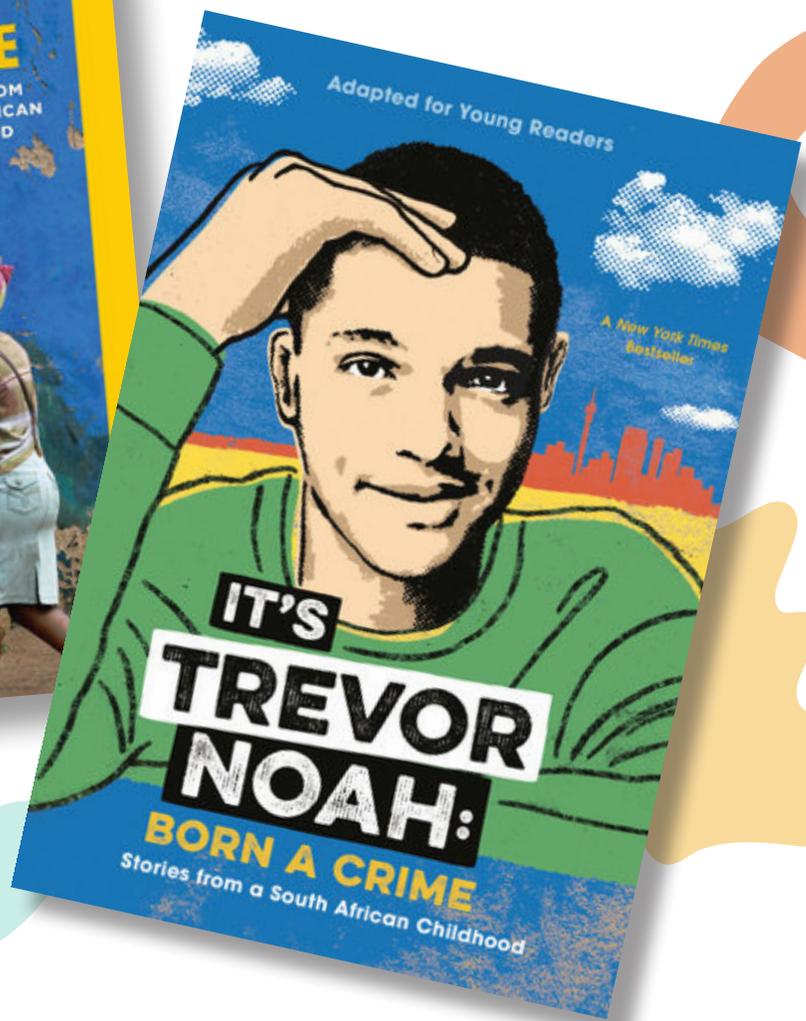
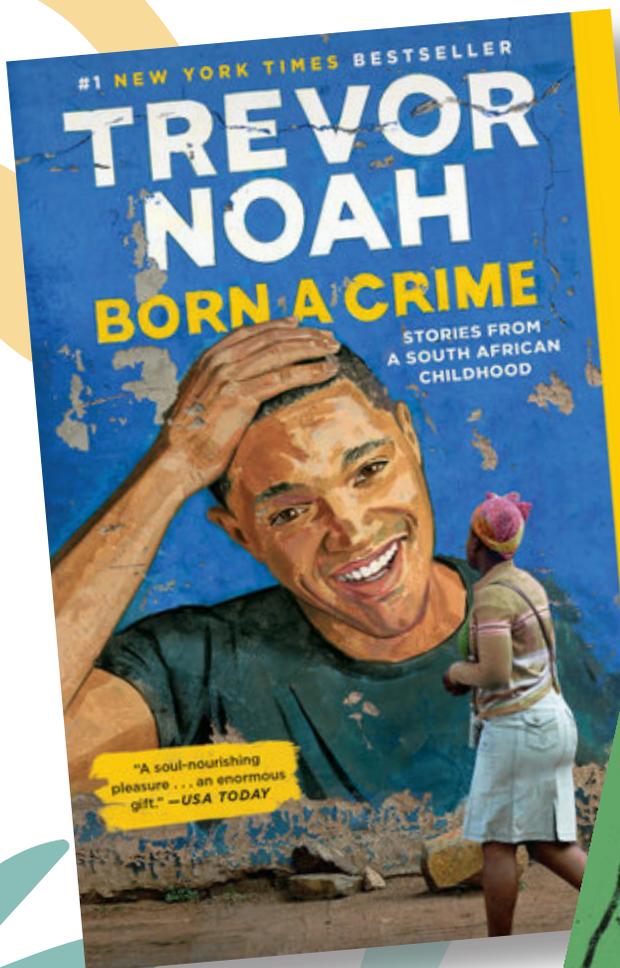


Brightly

FAMILY BOOK CLUB



ESSENTIAL THEMES

Review and discuss the overarching themes present in Trevor Noah's memoir.

POVERTY: On the one hand, Noah grew up very poor in a country where Black people were already at a huge disadvantage. On the other hand, Noah writes that he “never felt poor because our lives were so rich with experience.” What does it mean to live a life “rich with experience?” How do race and poverty intersect in our society?

PARENTING: Noah discusses many of his mother's parenting strategies, including administering “discipline from a place of love.” What special skills and strategies are necessary for Black parents in a country that teaches that they are inferior?

RULES: Noah questions a lot of rules: those of his home, his school, the Catholic Church, and the rules of apartheid. How does a person know when it's okay to break a rule? What are some rules in your life that don't make sense to you? Is anyone challenging those rules? If so, how?

BELIEFS & VALUES: Noah discusses religion several times in this book, especially his mother's faith. What values and beliefs do you share with your parents and grandparents? In what ways do your beliefs differ from theirs?

EDUCATION: Noah's mother was his first and his best teacher. How can one get an education outside of school? Are there lessons that cannot be learned in school? If so, what are some examples?

BELONGING: One of the major themes in this book revolves around being an insider/outsider. Noah often struggles to find his place as a poor, multi-racial kid in a changing South Africa with so many languages and such a difficult racial history. How does racism and/or the concept of race affect people's sense of belonging?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Use the following questions for book club conversations.

Part I

RUN

1. Why do you think Noah decides to open the book with stories about running?
2. At the end of this chapter, Noah writes, "Apartheid was perfect racism." The word "perfect" suggests that apartheid was a good thing, while in reality it really wasn't. Why does he use this wording?

BORN A CRIME

3. Noah says that because of his skin color his family life was "unsustainable," but his mom figures out a way to push through and ensure he had a good life. Identify an example of his mother's resilience in the face of discrimination and hardship.
4. "I couldn't understand why we'd stayed," Noah says after realizing he could have left. Why does Noah's mom choose to stay? And what would you do in this scenario?

5. What does this chapter title say about Noah as an insider/outsider?

TREVOR, PRAY

6. "I prefer 'open plan,'" Noah says. Throughout the book, Noah shows how he thinks differently than others. Think about the three chapters you've read so far and explain one way in which Noah's perspective is unique.
7. How does Noah's lack of a father figure influence his life?
8. The religious beliefs of Noah's mother have a significant impact on his life. Think about the title of this chapter. What do you think young Noah thought about praying?

CHAMELEON

9. Do you agree with the idea that "nothing great comes without taking risks?" (A quote from Denzel Washington.) What is a risk you have been willing to take? Did it pay off? Also, think about a risk you have not been willing to make. Explain.

10. Think about the title of this chapter and what a chameleon is/does. Connect the idea of being a chameleon with what it means to be an insider or outsider.

THE SECOND GIRL

11. Noah talks about his moving experience and how he had to adjust to the new things, people, and lifestyle. Have you ever had to go through this experience?

12. This chapter is proof that adult Noah has some vivid memories of his childhood. What is a vivid memory you have from your early childhood?

LOOPHOLES

13. Noah writes, “If you didn’t have my arm in a death grip, I was off running full speed towards the traffic.” This quote represents more than Noah just being hyperactive. What could he also be talking about? And what words stand out?

14. “The two things I loved most were fire and knives,” Noah writes. What is something that you take interest in or collect?

FUFI

15. The sidebar before chapter 8 is a conversation – different than most of the sidebars in the book. What is the importance of this conversation? And how does this connect to any of the themes in this book?

16. Noah talks about how dogs are loved and cherished. He then says, “The woman’s Maltese poodle had been impregnated by the bull terrier next door, a strange mix.” How does this relate to Noah and his childhood?

ROBERT

17. “I never called my dad ‘dad’... I couldn’t.” How do you think Noah’s relationship with his father impacts his life choices?

18. “Being chosen is the greatest gift you can give to another human being,” he writes. Explain your understanding of what Noah is saying here. Do you agree? Why or why not?

19. After reading Part I what title would you give it? Explain your answer.

Part II**THE MULBERRY TREE**

20. “It is easier to be an insider as an outsider than to be an outsider as an insider.” Noah gives us an example of that statement in his own life. What is an example you can provide from your life?

21. How did Noah end up feeling empathy for the boy who bullied him at the mulberry tree?

**A YOUNG MAN’S...
EDUCATION...PART I**

22. Noah describes Lorenzo as “dumb as rocks.” Why does he also say that he understands why Maylene made the Valentine’s Day choice she made?

OUTSIDER

23. What does it mean to be the “tuckshop guy?” Do you think being the tuckshop guy made Noah more or less of an outsider? Explain your answer.

COLOR BLIND

24. How is it that Noah was not arrested for shoplifting?

25. This chapter is called “Color Blind.” Who or what in this chapter is color blind, and why does this color blindness frustrate Noah so much?

**A YOUNG MAN’S...
EDUCATION...PART II**

26. Noah has the hair, the outfit, the car, and a beautiful young lady is accompanying him as his date. How is it that he “never got to go to [the] matric dance?”

27. After reading Part II, what title would you give it? Explain your answer.



Part III

GO HITLER!

28. How does a Black kid in South Africa end up with the first name, Hitler? (Apart from the answer, “that’s the name his mother gave him.”)

29. In this chapter, Noah is telling us a story of a cultural blind spot he had as a young person (about history and the Jewish people). When and how do you think this blind spot went away for him?

THE CHEESE BOYS

30. This chapter allows us to explore the theme of insider/outsider again. Bongani and his friends in Alexandra (“Alex”) – are they “cheese boys” or not? Do they want to be cheese boys? What do they say? What do others say?

31. Noah is drawn to “the ‘hood” because he can be an insider there even though he’s not from the ‘hood. Explain.

32. Noah gets deeper into a life of crime at this point in his life. How does a camera help him to see crime in a new way?

THE WORLD DOESN'T LOVE YOU

33. Noah has a serious insider/outsider dilemma – this time in jail. Why does he write that “I froze. I didn’t know where to go?”

34. Noah says that he learns the difference between prison and jail. How would you describe that difference?

MY MOTHER'S LIFE

35. Abel is a complicated character – he’s not the same person all the time. Explain.

36. Some readers may be surprised that Noah’s mother stayed with Abel as long as she did. How does Noah explain why she didn’t “just leave” sooner?

37. Noah makes a very important decision for himself in this chapter. What is it, and how does his relationship with his family change as a result?

38. Noah’s mother has a near-death experience that can certainly be described as a miracle. She does not seem surprised by her survival. How would she explain why she survived?

39. After reading Part III, what title would you give it? Explain your answer.

40. Think about the whole book. In what ways is Noah like his mother? In what ways is he different?

41. If you could ask Noah questions about one of the stories in his book, which one would it be and why? What would you ask?

