**Discussion Questions**

The following questions are intended for general use with all titles in this theme. They have been developed encourage a deeper discussion among participants and to provide general guidance and direction. Facilitators and participants are encouraged to research, prepare, and engage with additional questions specific to the book they are discussing at each session.

1. As readers, we all bring a certain set of expectations and assumptions to the table when we read any kind of book or text. What assumptions and expectations do you bring with you in regards to a book’s form or format, its voice, and/or narrative point of view? In what ways were these expectations challenged in the book being discussed?
2. How do unusual formats affect the chance that you might be willing to read a book? Do they distract you? Do you like unusual approaches? Do you seek them out? How do you think the form impacts the way you might interpret a story or poem? To what extent did the book being discussed explore new or unusual formats?
3. Literature in the 21st century so far is marked by a certain level of experimentation. What other art forms can you think of where such experimentation predominates?
4. What do you think of the notion that art extends from the essence of the times, also called the zeitgeist? If such a thing exists, how would you define the “time spirit”—zeitgeist—of our current era? And how does the book being discussed fit into, defy, or embrace this zeitgeist?
5. According to some cultural critics, literature during these first two decades of the 21st century has had as its role the exploration of “multiple truths.” What does this mean to you? Do you agree with this? Why or why not? What multiple truths do you see represented or explored in the book being discussed?
6. Transrealism is a genre of storytelling which asserts that reality is constructed and is otherwise non-existent, and that once we realize this, we can never see the world the same way again. What do you think of this idea? If this is true, how might it affect the way we conduct daily life? In what ways does the book being discussed approach reality as concrete vs constructed and how does this impact the story and characters?
7. Quick and easy global interaction has exposed us to ways of being previously unknown to us. This has had an impact on our definition of what identity means in the 21st century, and many would argue that we have a right and a duty to forge a unique self no matter what that means. Simultaneously, our sense of what constitutes community has changed, with virtual communities becoming more central to existence than physical communities. How does this book address individual vs community identity and what are the implications?
8. The theme essay states that traditional modes of structuring stories and poems “no longer offer the range or depth necessary to convey . . . the blurring of the line between reality and manufactured representations.” What is meant by “manufactured representations”? Do you agree with this? Why or why not?
9. In what ways is the book being discussed exploring the juxtaposition between cultural tradition and modern life? What assertions is it making in terms of one way of living being superior or inferior to the other?