**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. Many of the myths that helped to shape the west are largely Euro-centric. As you appraise these myths, consider the Indigenous and Euro-centric perspectives and how particular groups and cultures are represented. What attitudes and myths about the rural West and Western landscape do you see appearing across multiple books in this series? Is there a contemporary “myth of the West” that writers seem to share? (Remember that “myth” can mean “controlling story”–it doesn’t have to mean “false” story).
2. What economic, social, and personal problems are discussed in these books? Are those somehow caused or exacerbated by the characters’ residence in the rural West? Or might they happen anywhere?
3. Some of the writers represented in this series are native-born Westerners, including both indigenous people and those from other backgrounds. Others are refugees and immigrants. Do native-born Westerners seem, as a group, to think of the rural West differently than the imports?
4. Many of these books are about Western families. As writers consider their generational relationships, what kinds of questions do they ask? What sort of answers, if any, do they find? How does living in the rural west seem to have influenced their family life?
5. Many of these books are about relationships with Western neighbors. How does the nature of Western landscape influence people’s interactions? Do you think that these patterns are like those elsewhere, or different? People often claim that neighbors are “friendlier” in the West. Do these books bear that out?
6. Which of these books do you think are especially well-written? Why? What features of style/plot/character make them so?
7. As a Westerner yourself, do you identify with particular writers in this series? Which ones, and why?
8. How do these books, taken as a whole, comment on stereotypical images of the West as place of freedom, individual growth, and opportunity? Do they support those stereotypes, undermine them, or both? Do you agree with their conclusions?