

Tier 2 — Deeper Reading

Discussion Questions

For Funny You Should Ask... and Now What Are We Talking About Here? by Tim Gamble

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Tier 1 asked what happened. This tier asks what keeps happening — the patterns that only become visible once you've read enough of the book to notice them repeating.

A companion Facilitator Notes document has a second layer for each question. Use as much or as little as the room wants.

Save the last question for the end. Each book changes how you read the other — the second one reframes the first, and the first one gives the second its weight. So does hearing how everyone else read them. Ask it once, together, after the group has talked.

1. Strangers show up at exactly the right moment throughout both books — a cop, a judge, a ticket agent, an insurance adjuster, a Honda dealership father and son. By the end, does this feel like coincidence, luck, or something else — and does it matter which word you use for it?
2. Tim says his words were never weapons — they were buoys. Find a moment where the joke arrives at the hardest possible time. What do you think the humor is actually doing in that moment, and who is it really for: Tim, the person he's with, or the reader?
3. Tim is honest about real hardship — being beaten as a child, losing his job after twenty-three years, watching a friend endure racism he couldn't stop. He rarely sounds bitter about any of it. How does he manage that, and would you want to manage your own hard memories the same way?
4. Sandy appears throughout both books not just as a wife but as a force — she charges an armed intruder, she demands answers a doctor won't give, she buys plane tickets in secret for a decade. What did you learn about her that surprised you, and does the book give her enough credit for it?
5. Tim's mother believed he lived a charmed life. Sandy believed he had an angel on his shoulder, or a screw loose. Which reading of the same evidence do you find more convincing — and is there a third explanation neither of them offers?
6. Several times in the book, real danger — a knife, a gun, a truck driver, a runaway car on a mountain — gets resolved by talking rather than fighting. What does that pattern say about the kind of strength the book is actually interested in?
7. Tim rarely explains why he's telling you a story before he tells it. The meaning tends to arrive at the end, if it arrives at all. Did you find yourself waiting for a lesson that never quite came, and how did that feel by the time you reached the last page?
8. The book returns again and again to people who helped Tim for no reason they had to. Has this book changed how you notice small kindness in your own life since you started reading it — or made you more aware of the kindness you've overlooked in the past?

9. Tim describes humor as something that “wasn’t an act, wasn’t a con — it was just how I was built.” Do you believe people are born this way, or shaped into it by what they lived through?

10. If grace is one of this book’s central ideas, how would you define it in your own words, using a specific scene from either book as your evidence — and would the rest of the group agree with your definition?

11. Knowing what you’ve all just learned from each other tonight — the moments that stood out, the readings you didn’t expect, the patterns someone else noticed and you hadn’t — do you think you’d read the books again in a different light?

No set of questions can close out a book built on the idea that meaning surfaces rather than resolves. If tonight’s conversation raised more questions than it answered, that’s not unfinished business — it’s the book working exactly as intended. There’s always more to discover here, in the books and in each other.

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Facilitator Notes

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A NOTE FOR THE FACILITATOR

These aren't answers — each note gives you a little more context, then ends with a sharper question you can ask word for word if the room needs somewhere further to go.

- 1. Strangers at the right moment.** The motorcycle chapter states this almost as a formula: “Once is coincidence. Twice is good luck. Three times — against the odds.” Try counting, as a group, how many strangers you can remember helping Tim across just one book. *Once you have a number — does it still feel like coincidence, or something else?*
- 2. Buoys, not weapons.** There's a difference between humor that connects you to a moment and humor that lets you escape it. *Can you find a scene where the joke seems to keep Tim present rather than letting him check out — and one where it might be doing the opposite?*
- 3. Hardship without bitterness.** The absence of bitterness could be earned or performed. *Is there a moment in either book where you think you can feel the actual cost of choosing gratitude instead of grievance — even for just a sentence?*
- 4. Sandy as a force.** Try building a version of Sandy using only her actions, not Tim's descriptions of her. *Does the woman who emerges match how Tim describes her, or does she come across as tougher, or different, than his own affectionate framing suggests?*
- 5. Charmed, angel, or screw loose.** All three readings come from people who loved him, and none of them agree. *What does it mean that the people closest to him couldn't settle on one explanation — is that a gap in the story, or part of its honesty?*
- 6. Talking instead of fighting.** Nearly every dangerous moment in these books gets defused with words instead of force. *Can you find the one time that doesn't happen — and what do you think is different about that scene?*
- 7. Waiting for a lesson.** Many chapters land on an image rather than a stated moral — the meaning arrives, if it arrives, without being explained. *Did that make a story land harder for you, or softer — and why do you think Tim made that choice?*
- 8. Noticing kindness since reading.** Some readers report noticing small kindnesses around them differently once they're a few chapters in. *Has anything like that happened to you — and if so, what did you notice?*
- 9. Born this way, or built.** There's no wrong answer here. *Can you find a moment in Tim's childhood that either supports or complicates the idea that his humor was innate rather than something he built to survive?*

10. Defining grace with evidence. This is likely the deepest question in the tier, and it may divide the room — that's a good outcome. *Using one scene as your only evidence, how would you define grace, and would everyone else in the room accept your definition?*

11. Closing question. Same principle as Tier 1 — hold this until the end. The group's own disagreement about Sandy, about grace, about what the humor is really doing, is itself part of what these two books argue: that meaning is found in company, not settled alone. *Now that you've heard everyone else's reading — has your own understanding of either book actually changed, or have you simply found other people who read it the way you do?*

There is so much here left to be discovered — in the books, and in each other.

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