



Big Read Participant Focus Group Protocol [Case-Study Sites Only]

Introduction / Warm Up: (about 5 minutes)

- Moderator introduces self and goals
- Ground rules (e.g., everyone gets a chance to speak, both positive and negative comments useful, one speaker at a time, confidentiality of ideas, etc.)
- Introductions/general information from participants: Name; year in school (if applicable); if teacher, what grade taught; if military, what branch of service other info. (To save time, we might ask participants to complete a short demographics/sign-in sheet)

Discussion (about 40-50 minutes)

Note: These aren't necessarily questions to be strictly followed, rather they are points that should be covered during the conversation.

(1) Program appeal and level participation.

- How did you first hear about *The Big Read*? [Probe for info. related to PSAS].
- What was it about the program that appealed to you?
- What events have you participated in? Why? Have you participated in these events on your own, or with others (friends, family, etc.)?

(2) Reading background.

- Prior to participating in *The Big Read*, how often did you read for pleasure? What kinds of things did you read? [Probe for nonfiction (newspapers, magazines, instructional manuals), electronic sources (blogs, websites, online magazines, etc.), and mixed media (e.g., graphic novels) as well as literature.]
- Where do you typically get books—from the library, a bookstore, from a friend or family member?
- Do you acquire books, or pick books, any differently than you did 5 years ago?

- Would you like to read more literature? Why? What factors influence the amount of literature reading you do (e.g., time, participation in groups, knowledge of authors and books, etc.)?
- Have you ever read this book before? When? Why did you choose to read it again? (This question might be covered in question 1, program appeal)
- Have you ever seen a dramatic presentation of this book (e.g., movie, play)? When?
- Had you previously read anything in school or for pleasure:
 - by this author?
 - set in this time period (probe here for nonfiction as well as fiction)?
 - in this same genre (science fiction for 451, historical fiction for the others)
 - dealing with the same themes (e.g., the Dust Bowl era/the Jazz age/the lives of immigrants in the plains of the US/the dangers of censorship/World War II/racism/ Chinese/ American immigrants/etc.)?

(3) Responses to book. Now let's talk about {book}. *(Try to keep this to about 20 minutes ... the idea here is to get an overview of themes and ideas. That might mean having to direct the conversation away from becoming a flat-out book group discussion.)*

- How far along are you in the book? (If people are at different places in the book, we should ask the group to avoid talking about specific plot points so we don't spoil the ending.)
- What are your reactions so far? Probe for specifics on:
 - themes
 - characters
 - plot
 - setting
 - writing style
- Was this book a good choice for your community? Why/why not?
- Did this book seem to be at the right level for readers taking part in various events?
- Are there any aspects of the book that you can relate to your own life, or that seem especially different from your life? What have you learned about yourself or your community by reading this book?
 - For instance, which character(s) do you identify with the most? Why?

- Are there conflicts that you have or have not encountered that particularly struck you (e.g., censorship, mother-daughter tension, poverty, racism)?
- Is the setting especially similar or different to where you live? How?
- {Name of book} takes place in a time period different from the present day. Do you think it relates to current events or modern-day challenges? If so, how?

(4) Responses to/effectiveness of events. Let's talk about *The Big Read* events you've attended. You mentioned at the beginning of the conversation that you'd done {X}.

- What are your general reactions to the events you've attended? Probe for:
 - interest in/ enjoyment of the activity
 - connection to the book
 - quality of information at the event (e.g., quality of speakers)
 - accessibility of event to diverse groups (i.e., was the event something that the whole family could do, was it accessible to people with different amounts of knowledge of the book, its author, or its setting)
 - organization of event (timing, length, location, structure, publicity)
- What did you learn from the event(s) about:
 - the book
 - its themes
 - its time period
 - its author?
- Do you wish you had attended the event(s) before, during, or after you read the book? Why?
- If you've attended more than one event, does one stand out for you more than the other(s)? Why?
- Would you like to or are you planning to attend other *Big Read* events? Which ones?
- If you could plan an event to coincide with {book}, what would you like to do? Describe and explain why.

(5) Impact on reading attitudes or behaviors

- What sorts of things have you done or are you planning to do in response to reading {book}?
- Have you talked about the book with family or friends? If so, what have you discussed with them?

- Have you read anything else by the author? If so, what? Have you read anything in the same genre, or with the same setting or themes? Have you or do you plan to read another work of fiction, poetry or drama in the next six months? Describe.
- Have you done anything to learn more about the themes presented in this program (e.g., follow-up with magazines, web, television, book, lecture, museum exhibits, etc.)?
- Do you plan to participate in future library events, read a book recommended by the library, or participate in a book discussion? Why?
- Has reading {book} changed or expanded your attitudes about reading literature for pleasure? If so, how?

(6) Is there anything more you'd like to say about your experience in *The Big Read*?