

Southfield Public Library

Room by Emma Donoghue

Discussion questions used at SPL October 2014

1. Was this book what you expected it to be, from reading the blurbs and reviews? Did it live up – or down!- to those expectations?
2. Why do you think she told the story through Jack’s voice? Was it easier to hear about some of the details through a child’s perspective? Was his voice authentic? Were there things you were surprised he knew about? And things he didn’t?
3. If you closed your eyes, how would you picture Jack, physically? Was he small for his age? What about that ponytail? How would you picture him emotionally? Was he smarter than you thought he should be? Braver? Was he happy?
4. How would you describe Ma’s state of mind in the first part of the book, before the escape? Did you get an idea of what sort of person she was from Jack’s tale?
5. Why do you think we never learn Ma’s name? Did that make her less of a person, or make her belong more to Jack than the rest of the world?
6. What did you think of the titles of the different parts of the book.... Did they give you a preview of what they would be about?
7. Which did you find more interesting... when they were captives or when they were trying to navigating the world again?
8. Do you think Ma did a good job of raising Jack in Room? Do you think he kept her sane? Why do you think she was still breastfeeding him?
9. When Ma talked about Jesus and the saints, did you get the sense that she believed in them or were they just a story, like the others she told Jack? Was there too much religion in this book?
10. Who do you think had a harder time in Outside... Jack or Ma? Could their adjustment have been easier? What could have been done differently?
11. Even though we only saw him through Jack’s eyes and Ma’s descriptions to Jack, did you get a sense of how evil Old Nick was? Did you ever get a sense that Ma had ever accepted her fate?
12. While no specific date was set, it was clear the book was set in the here and now, with the kidnapping done within the last ten years or so... what did you think of Ma’s reintroduction into the world of technology, with all the changes that have occurred during her imprisonment?
13. Did you see the two of them as not belonging to the times?
14. Why do you think Ma overdosed? Do you think it was intentional?
15. What did you think of Ma’s mother – Grandma? How did she react to having her daughter back? What do you think their relationship was like before the kidnapping? What about her father? What were their expectations? Were they realistic?
16. Leo, or Steppa, seemed to be the one who got Jack the best.... He didn’t seem to expect him to be anything but what he was, a confused, frightened kid finding his way... why do you think he was able to do that so easily?
17. How did Grandma do with Jack?
18. Could you put yourself in Jack’s shoes, in not understanding how the world works? Have you ever been in a situation even a little bit close to that?

19. How does the author portray today's media in this book? Is it realistic?
20. Why do you think we are all so fascinated by such events... like [Elizabeth Smart](#) and [Jaycee Lee Dugard](#) and the [women from Cleveland](#).... Why do we think we deserve to know all the details? Do we? Is it better for such things to be known or to be glossed over?
21. Does the world knowing the details make it easier or harder for the victims?
22. Donoghue drew up a floorplan of Room... http://www.roomthebook.com/inside/reading-group-guide/room_floorplan.pdf 121 square feet.. 11x11 How claustrophobic does it make you seeing it laid out like this?
23. Would you have wanted to go back and visit Room? Did it do Jack any good? What about Ma?
24. One review I read said for a book about captivity, they were surprised that Ma and Jack got free halfway through the book... would you consider them free once they got out of Room? When do you think their freedom really began? Do you have hopes for them?
- 25.

Southfield Public Library

General discussion questions

- For the person who chose the book – What made you want to read it? What made you pick it for the book club? Did it live up to your expectations?
- How is the book structured? First person? Third person? Flashbacks? Narrative devices? Do you think the author did a good job with it?
- How would you describe the author’s writing style? Concise? Flowery? How is language used in this book? Read aloud a passage that really struck you. How does that passage relate to the book as a whole?
- How effective is the author’s use of plot twists? Were you able to predict certain things before they happened? Did the author keep you guessing until the end?
- Did the book hold your interest?
- How important is the setting to the story? Did you feel like you were somewhere else? Did the time setting make a difference in the story? Did the author provide enough background information for you to understand the setting and time placement?
- Which is stronger in the book – the characters or the plots?
- Would you recommend this book to someone else? Why? And to whom?

Southfield Public Library

Title: Room by Emma Donoghue

Discussion questions taken from a website

website address:

<http://oneminutebookreviews.wordpress.com/2011/02/15/a-totally-unauthorized-reading-group-guide-to-emma-donoghues-room-with-10-discussion-questions/>

<http://www.litlovers.com/reading-guides/13-fiction/1235-room-donoghue?start=3>

<http://simplystated.realsimple.com/2011/04/04/room-author-emma-donoghue-answers-your-questions/>

http://www.roomthebook.com/inside/reading-group-guide/room_floorplan.pdf