

# Southfield Public Library

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## *The Turner House* by Angela Flournoy

*Discussion questions used at July 10 & 11, 2018*

**Discussion Questions taken from LitLovers.com (author's website- [angelaflournoy.com](http://angelaflournoy.com)):**

1. Throughout the book, characters struggle with the concept of belonging—to blood relations, in-laws, and even the city of Detroit. What does it mean to “belong” in a group? How do characters come to terms with their own feelings of belonging by the end of the novel?
2. The city of Detroit plays a large role in the way characters see themselves, particularly for Francis Turner in the 1940s. How does the city itself contribute to the story of the Turner family? Can you imagine a similar story taking place elsewhere, or is the story inextricably tied to Detroit?
3. Cha-Cha sees himself as the patriarch of the family, but he also has trouble getting his siblings to listen to him. In what ways does Cha-Cha’s view of himself as the leader prevent his siblings from trusting or respecting him?
4. In their final meeting (p. 241), Alice tells Cha-Cha that she thinks his haint has made him feel extraordinary, and that she doesn’t think he really wants to let it go. Do you agree with her observation? What might the haint provide to Cha-Cha that he otherwise lacks in his life?
5. Alice describes Cha-Cha as the prime minister of his family, and Viola as the queen; she has the title, but is not concerned with day-to-day governance. What is your impression of Viola when you first meet her in the novel, and how does that impression change over time?
6. As the baby, Lelah thinks she has missed out on many of the best moments and secrets in Turner family history. How might her role as the youngest have contributed to her addiction to gambling? Do you think she has truly turned a corner by the novel’s end?
7. Lelah and David become close very quickly. Why do you think Lelah is drawn to David, and why does David not break things off when he finds out about Lelah staying on Yarrow Street?
8. Troy is the only sibling not present at the party that takes place the end of the novel. Did you get the impression that he is on the path to change? Why or why not?
9. Both Francis and Cha-Cha have a precarious relationship with belief, both in religion and the supernatural. How does each character’s beliefs shift over time, and what effect do those changes have on their relationship to others?

10. Compare and contrast Lelah and Cha-Cha's reactions to the news of Viola's worsened condition. What do their reactions tell us about their similarities and differences? What do we learn about their roles in the family?

11. The move from Arkansas to Detroit is very important to Turner family history, and it places them among the hundreds of thousands of African Americans who moved North during the Great Migration. How is Francis and Viola's relationship changed by the move? How do the challenges they face in Detroit contribute to the way they raise their children?

12. At its core, do you see the Turners as a strongly bonded family? What does it mean for a family to be bonded, especially when people move further away from one another and start their own families?

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## *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?

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*Title:*

*Discussion questions taken from a website:*

*website address:*