

## **Book Club Questions for Crook Manifesto by Colson Whitehead**

1. Ray Carney, the main character, is torn between his past life of crime and his desire to lead a straight-and-narrow path. How do you see his internal struggle evolve throughout the different parts of the novel? What events or moments influence his decisions?
2. In the first part of the book, Ray needs to obtain Jackson 5 tickets for his daughter May and ends up getting pulled back into the criminal world. How does this decision impact the events that unfold later in the story? What does it reveal about Ray's character and motivations?
3. Pepper is described as an "endearingly violent partner in crime." How does Pepper's character add depth and complexity to the narrative? Discuss the development of his character and the role he plays in each part of the novel.
4. The novel explores the historical backdrop of 1970s New York City, with trash-filled streets, rising crime rates, and a shooting war between the NYPD and the Black Liberation Army. How does the author use this turbulent era to enhance the atmosphere and themes of the story?
5. Colson Whitehead's writing style has been praised for its vivid sense of place and time. How does the portrayal of Harlem in the novel contribute to the overall experience and impact of the story?
6. In the second part of the book, Pepper becomes involved in the world of Hollywood stars, up-and-coming comedians, and celebrity drug dealers. How does this environment affect Pepper's actions and decisions? What themes emerge from this part of the story?
7. The third part of the novel explores the challenges faced by the Tran family, Vietnamese refugees running a nail salon in Toronto. How does this aspect of the story connect with the larger themes of the novel, such as family and resilience?
8. Ray Carney's wife, Elizabeth, plays a significant role in his life and the story. How would you describe their relationship and its impact on the events that unfold in the novel? How does the portrayal of their marriage add depth to the overall narrative?
9. Colson Whitehead is renowned for his masterful language and writing style. Can you identify specific passages or quotes from the book that stood out to you as particularly well-crafted or emotionally resonant? How did the author's writing style influence your reading experience?
10. Some people have mentioned that this book is the second in a trilogy featuring Ray Carney. If you haven't read the first book, "Harlem Shuffle," did you feel like you missed any crucial context or character development? If you

have read the first book, how do the two novels complement each other, and what do you anticipate for the final installment in the trilogy?

11. The book introduces corrupt characters and a network of corruption that reaches the highest levels of the city and its government. How does the theme of corruption play out in the narrative, and how does it contribute to the overall portrayal of the city in crisis?

12. Colson Whitehead's "Crook Manifesto" is described as a darkly funny tale. Can you identify moments of humor in the novel? How does the use of humor impact the overall tone and themes of the story?

13. The novel is divided into three parts, each focusing on different characters and events. Discuss the structure of the book and how it contributes to the overall narrative. Did you have a favorite part or character? Why?

14. The book's ending leaves some questions unanswered and suggests the possibility of a continuation in a trilogy. What are your thoughts on the ending, and would you be interested in reading more about these characters and their world in future installments?

15. Overall, what was your favorite aspect of "Crook Manifesto"? How does the novel compare to other works by Colson Whitehead that you may have read? Would you recommend this book to others? Why or why not?