

DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. What does it mean to lift the cotton wool and peek at some real things? Why might that be a painful and difficult endeavor?
2. Think about a time you were confronted with something you didn't understand but that you wanted to understand. What steps, if any, did you take to move closer to understanding, to knowing? Think about a time you were confronted with something you didn't understand but felt helpless in coming to know it. What happened next? How do these questions relate to the journey that Alisse and Charlotte take in *Light in Dark Times*?
3. Anthropology is the scholarly discipline that forms the skin of this book, informing its content. What anthropological concepts can you extract from the images and texts in the graphic book? How are these concepts different from or similar to other scholarly disciplines?
4. Discuss ways *Light in Dark Times* invokes actual historical figures and events and how it uses characters and situations allegorically to represent ideas and issues.
5. Identify and discuss the major issues of current dark times.
6. In their encounters, Alisse and Charlotte meet notable poets, novelists, philosophers, activists, and anthropologists of the past and the present and whose words appear in *Light in Dark Times*. Choose a line, phrase, or sentence as spoken or written by a character that leaps out and explain why it resonates with you.
7. Beyond those cited in *Light in Dark Times*, who are notable thinkers you have encountered whose works have helped illuminate your understanding of the world?
8. The images in *Light in Dark Times* are a means to convey the processes of thinking and introspection, of looking, seeing, perceiving, and understanding the world, and of searching for a meaningful life in the world. Choose an illustration—a frame, a single page, or a two-page spread—that leaps out and explain why it resonates with you. What meaning/s do you “read” in this illustration?
9. Identify and discuss particular ways *Light in Dark Times* brings the past into the present.

Light in Dark Times: The Human Search for Meaning
Written by Alisse Waterston and Illustrated by Charlotte Corden

10. Underlying the book's storyline are two central questions: What of us in these times? How will we pass the time that is given us on Earth? Reflect on your own life and put in writing your response to the two questions.

11. Identify specific examples of trivia that you observe in the world around you. Discuss what role/s such trivia plays in people's daily lives.

12. Today, manipulation of thought, the problem of political lying and the dissemination of trivia seem to have reached a boiling point. Discuss ways in which social media facilitates the dissemination of lies and trivia and makes difficult the dissemination of truth. In what ways might social media be used to counter its own destructive qualities?

13. What does it mean to "know the world"? What does *Light in Dark Times* suggest about how to go about "knowing" it?

14. Dare to Dream: Take up Eduardo Galeano's dare and exercise the right to dream. Rave a bit. Set your sights beyond the abominations of today to divine another possible world. In a group of 5–15 people, write down on a slip of paper what one thing you would implement—if you had the power to do so—to make a concrete change in the world as we know it. Place your slip of paper in a container (a jar, a hat, whatever is available). One by one, lift the slips of paper, reading aloud one another's vision (don't read your own). Have an open-ended discussion and be attentive to mood and feelings as well as to ideas.

15. Discuss the possibilities for humankind to come to mutual understanding on a gigantic scale.

16. What specific feelings and thoughts surfaced for you as you read and viewed *Light in Dark Times*?