

How to Start a Humanist Book Club

Why a Book Club?

Book Clubs can be a great low-pressure space to spark deep discussion and explore diverse perspectives without forcing anyone to delve into personal topics they might not be comfortable discussing with the entire group. Reading books together is a great way to form bonds over shared opinions and experiences, and you certainly don't have to be a literary expert!

Step-by-Step:

- 1. Choose a format.**
 - a. Monthly is what's recommended, but more frequently is always great!
 - b. Virtual or in-person?
 - c. **Tip:** Don't be discouraged if you start with only 3-5 people! Those are great numbers for deep, insightful discussions.
- 2. Pick the first book.**
 - a. This is totally up to you! Think about what you personally might be super interested in reading, but also consider what others might want to read and what material will spark the most interesting conversations.
 - b. Great topics for books relating to humanism include ethics, justice, reason, identity, wonder, morality, and more.
- 3. Make your invitations.**
 - a. Reach out to your friends, coworkers, peers, neighbors, and anyone you know who you think might be interested and make a good addition to the group.
 - b. Below is an example of a blurb that could be used to reach out to people digitally:
 - i. "Curious minds wanted! We're launching a monthly Humanist Book Club – a space to explore big questions, diverse stories, and what it means to live ethically without religion."
- 4. Choose your space.**
 - a. This could be a member's house, a local library, restaurant, or anywhere that feels right to you.
- 5. Host your first meeting.**

- a. Use your social energy to make sure you're setting a tone for the group that is welcoming, nonjudgemental, and curious. It's important that attendees feel comfortable expressing their opinions, while still understanding the requirement that everyone be respectful of one another. As the leader, a lot of the responsibility for maintaining that atmosphere falls on your shoulders.
 - b. Provide snacks, and let guests know that they are encouraged to bring food or refreshments or any other materials they are willing to bring.
- 6. Come up with good questions to ask.**
- a. Basic questions to consider asking:
 - i. What were you moved by?
 - ii. What part of the book surprised you the most?
 - iii. Did this book challenge your beliefs? If so, how?
 - iv. How do the themes of this book connect to humanist values?
 - b. Some books contain discussion questions at the end, reading those over and highlighting the best ones can be super helpful.
 - c. If you still need more questions, you can always look online for more questions or read over discussions on the book that have been posted online or as videos to YouTube.
- 7. Keep it going.**
- a. Before the meeting is over, select the next book!
 - i. Have a list for potential follow-up books prepared, but also ask the attendees for suggestions.
 - ii. You can decide by having a vote if you want, but that level of formality is not always necessary.
 - b. Create a group chat or email list to send updates on future meetings.

Additional helpful tips:

- Include books written by authors with diverse backgrounds and experiences.
- Be clear about the accessibility, length, and subject matter of each book that is selected.
- Consider alternating between different media types like essays and podcasts.
- Allow space for respectful disagreements.