

On Tyranny by Timothy Snyder

Session 1

March 9th, 2025

Twenty Lessons

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| 1. Do not obey in advance | 11. Investigate |
| 2. Defend institutions | 12. Make eye contact and small talk |
| 3. Beware the one-party state | 13. Practice corporeal politics |
| 4. Take responsibility for the face of the world | 14. Establish a private life |
| 5. Remember professional ethics | 15. Contribute to good causes |
| 6. Be wary of paramilitaries | 16. Learn from peers in other countries |
| 7. Be reflective if you must be armed | 17. Listen for dangerous words |
| 8. Stand out | 18. Be calm when the unthinkable arrives |
| 9. Be kind to our language | 19. Be a patriot |
| 10. Believe in truth | 20. Be as courageous as you can |

Discussion Questions

1. Which of Snyder's 20 lessons resonated with you the most? What lessons did you find questionable or did not resonate? Which ones felt the hardest to apply in everyday life? What lessons felt the easiest?
2. Snyder presents *On Tyranny* as a guide based on lessons from history. Which historical examples stood out to you the most, and why? Are there other historical examples that came to mind when reading through the lessons?
3. Were there any lessons that surprised you or made you rethink how you view democracy and authoritarianism?
4. Lesson 2 states "*Defend institutions*". What institutions do you think are important to defend, and why?
5. Lesson 10 states, "*Believe in truth*." How does misinformation or propaganda contribute to the erosion of democracy, and what can we do about it?
6. In "*Make eye contact and small talk*," Snyder suggests that maintaining social bonds can be a form of resistance. How does this idea challenge conventional views of political action?
7. Snyder warns against "*anticipatory obedience*." What, if any, examples of this have you noticed in real life?
8. How do the *politics of inevitability* and the *politics of eternity* show up in the world today?
9. Do you feel differently about your role as a citizen after reading this book? If so, how?
10. Snyder ends by urging readers to "*Be as courageous as you can*." What does courage look like in today's world?
11. Do you think these lessons are necessary and applicable in today's environment? If yes, what is one lesson you want to commit to acting on over the next few days?