

Discussion Guide for “Bid Whist” Analysis

Objective:

This discussion guide is designed to facilitate conversations around the themes of loneliness, isolation, inauthenticity, and the courage to connect, as portrayed in the provided script. The guide encourages participants to solely reflect on the characters’ experiences, explore their motivations, and relate the scenarios to broader social and personal contexts.

Introduction (5-10 minutes)

1. Opening Remarks:

- Watch the production
- Identify and discuss the central themes
- Explain the purpose of the discussion to explore the characters’ emotions, motivations, and the broader social issues that influence their lives.
- Encourage open and respectful dialogue, reminding participants that the discussion is a safe space to share thoughts and feelings.

2. Initial Impressions

- Ask participants for their immediate reactions to the production.
 - What stood out to them about the characters and their situations?
-

Character Analysis (20-30 minutes)

1. Marvin

- Marvin says that playing Bid Whist has become more important to him than ever due to having to limit activities that he and Charles used to do, like traveling. Discuss how loss of hobbies and interests can lead to isolation.
- Marvin expresses irritation at Lori for being slow to learn the game. Later he admits to being scared and frustrated because winning the tournament is so important to him. How is his irritation related to his loneliness? What makes him reconsider his behavior?

2. Charles

- Charles discusses the fact that he and Melvin have given up driving, and feel vulnerable when taking public transportation due to their age. Discuss ways that our transportation system leads to isolation, particularly for older people.
- Charles insists that his partner Melvin listen to what he has to say about Lori's skills as a fashion designer and tailor. How does this shift in focus from the game help his partner get a new perspective?

3. Janice

- Janice tells Marvin about her upcoming trip to Arizona to help her sister, who is a caretaker for her husband. What ways does she say caretaking causes isolation?
- Janice encourages Melvin to "cut Lori a break." Why is Janice trying to redirect Marvin's focus? How do you think that this will help him, Lori, and the group?

4. Cynthia

- Cynthia questions Marvin's hesitancy to use public transportation, suggesting that he is biased. How might preconceived ideas about safety lead to isolation.
- Cynthia mentions having to plan things more carefully due to aging. She says, "Sometimes it feels like the city is working against us." Explain how the "city" might be working against older people and leading to isolation.

2. Lori

- Lori says that she took up the challenge of learning Bid Whist because it is "better than sitting around my apartment switching channels." How can accepting new challenges work to combat isolation?
- Like the other characters, Lori mentions loss of ability (eyesight) as a deterrent to attending activities. How does this reflect on our culture and transportation system when it comes to inclusion?

Thematic Exploration (15-20 minutes)

1. Transportation

- What ways do the experiences of the characters highlight problems with our transportation system? How do these problems lead to isolation and loneliness?
- Discuss ways that we could make our transportation system more inclusive for people of all ages, but particularly for older people who may no longer have the ability to drive.

2. Accepting Challenges

- The characters face and accept challenges related to aging. Discuss how accepting new challenges and being life-long learners can combat isolation and loneliness.
-

Relating to Broader Context (10-15 minutes)

1. Structural Barriers

- How do the structural barriers mentioned in the script (transportation, design of cities) add to social isolation, especially in the case of older people.
- How might caretaking be a structural barrier? How could we structure our institutions and culture to better support caretakers?

2. Personal Reflections

- Invite participants to share if they can relate to any of the characters' experiences. How have they dealt with similar challenges?
 - What steps can individuals take in their own lives to overcome loneliness and be more proactive in being social and accepting new challenges?
-

Conclusion (5-10 minutes)

1. Closing Thoughts:

- Summarize the key points discussed and invite any final reflections.
- Encourage participants to think about how they can apply insights from the discussion to their own lives and communities.

2. Next Steps:

- Offer resources or suggest further readings on the topics discussed
 - If appropriate, invite participants to continue the conversation in a follow-up session or in other settings
-

This guide is intended to encourage thoughtful and empathetic conversations, helping participants to engage deeply with their characters' struggles and triumphs, and to connect to these fictional experiences to real world challenges.