

Discussion Guide for “The Coffee Shop” 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?
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Character Analysis (20-30 minutes)

1. Ola (Jesse’s Grandma):

- How does Ola’s sense of loneliness manifest in her dialogue?
- What are the implications of her decision to remain in the church despite many others leaving? What does this say about her character?
- Discuss her relationship with Jesse. How might her interaction with him influence his journey of self-discovery?

2. Ken (Middle-aged Man):

- Explore Ken’s frustration with the superficial nature of modern dating apps. How does this relate to feelings of isolation and disconnection?

- Discuss the contrast between Ken’s internal desires for connection and the external behaviors he exhibits (e.g., swiping left, avoiding eye contact).
 - How does Ken’s reluctance to be vulnerable impact his chances of forming meaningful relationships?
- 3. Jack (Arriving at the Coffee Shop):**
- What challenges does Jack face in reconciling his identity with his life as a husband and father?
 - How does Jack’s fear of losing respect and his family contribute to his internal conflict?
 - Discuss Jack’s request to simply talk with Ken. What does this suggest about his desire for a genuine connection?
- 4. Jesse (17-year-old Barista):**
- How does Jesse’s uncertainty about his sexual identity and fear of coming out affect his interactions with others?
 - Discuss Jesse’s contemplation of moving to the city. What does the city represent for him?
 - Explore the potential impact of Jesse’s conversation with his grandma. How might this influence his decision to come out?
- 5. Glenn (In His Mid-Seventies):**
- How does Glenn’s financial situation and need to continue working contribute to his feelings of loneliness and embarrassment?
 - How does transportation play into loneliness?
 - Discuss the significance of Glenn’s decision to work at the coffee shop. What does it reveal about his approach to overcoming loneliness?
 - Explore the potential reconnection between Glenn and Ola. How might their shared history influence their present-day interactions?
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Thematic Exploration (15-20 minutes)

1. Loneliness and Isolation:

- How does the script depict different forms of loneliness across the characters?
- What are some of the societal factors that contribute to the characters' feelings of isolation?

2. Inauthenticity and Identity:

- Discuss how the characters struggle with being their authentic selves. What pressures do they face from their communities, families, or social expectations?
- How do these pressures affect their ability to connect with others?

3. The Courage to Connect:

- Despite their fears and uncertainties, each character takes a step toward connection. Discuss the significance of these actions.
 - What can we learn from their attempts to reach out to others, even in small ways?
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Relating to Broader Contexts (10-15 minutes)

1. Community and Support:

- How do community dynamics (e.g., the church's decision, small-town life) influence the characters' experiences?
- What role does support (or lack thereof) from friends, family, and community play in the characters' lives?

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 authentic in their relationships?
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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 the characters' struggles and triumphs, and to connect these fictional experiences to real-world challenges.