



Caste Group Discussion Guide

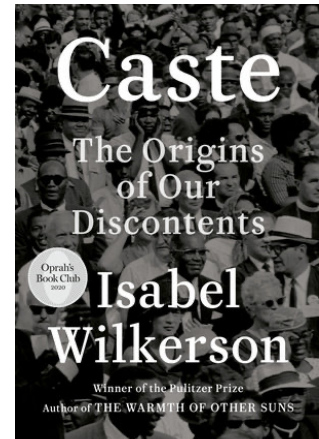
Dive into this month's *Conscious Conversation* with these questions about *Caste*.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The questions and discussion topics that follow are designed to enhance your group's discussion of *Caste*, written by Isabel Wilkerson.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

Isabel Wilkerson explores how America has been shaped by a hidden caste system that influences people's lives and behavior and the nation's fate. Linking the caste systems of America, India, and Nazi Germany, Wilkerson explores eight pillars that underlie caste systems across civilizations, including divine will, bloodlines, stigma, and more. Using riveting stories about people—including Martin Luther King, Jr., baseball's Satchel Paige, a single father and his toddler son, Wilkerson herself, and many others—she shows the ways that the insidious undertow of caste is experienced every day. She documents how the Nazis studied the racial systems in America to plan their out-cast of the Jews; she discusses why the cruel logic of caste requires that there be a bottom rung for those in the middle to measure themselves against; she writes about the surprising health costs of caste, in depression and life expectancy, and the effects of this hierarchy on our culture and politics. Finally, she points forward to ways America can move beyond the artificial and destructive separations of human divisions, toward hope in our common humanity.



DIGITAL RESOURCE

In Conversation: Author Isabel Wilkerson (2021 Knight Media Forum) (52-minute listen)

Listen to an interview with Isabel Wilkerson where she talks about how castes have fundamentally shaped American society.

<https://vimeo.com/521147239>



Caste Discussion Topics

1. What keeps the caste hierarchy in place today? What power structures created by slavery still exist today?
2. What have you experienced, or witnessed, that might be a manifestation of the caste system in action?
3. Where are you in the caste hierarchy, and what has that meant for your life? How has the caste system constrained or benefited you?
4. Discuss how overt racism subtly transformed into unconscious bias. What are the ways that we can work to counter the unconscious biases inherent in the caste system?
5. Who in your life has directly taken on the caste system? What are some of the steps that society, and each of us, can take toward dismantling the caste system?
6. How has the pandemic reinforced the American caste system? What was unseen for you that is now seen?
7. What other peoples could she choose to write about in the book that she does not mention?

AFTER YOUR CONVERSATION

We would love to hear about your conversation. If you would like to share any of your discussion notes, comments or photos with Legacy Foundation, please send them to mfishback@legacyfdn.org