

Marlborough Public Library **Great Reads Book Club**

January 13 or 15 2026

There There by Tommy Orange

Questions abridged from:

https://images.penguinrandomhouse.com/promo_image/9780525520375_5517.pdf

1. Discuss the development of the “Urban Indian” identity and ownership of that label. How does it relate to the push for assimilation by the United States government? How do the characters in *There There* navigate this modern form of identity alongside their ancestral roots?
2. Consider the following statement from page 9: “We stayed because the city sounds like a war, and you can’t leave a war once you’ve been, you can only keep it at bay.” In what ways does the historical precedent for violent removal of Native populations filter into the modern era? How does violence—both internal and external—appear throughout the narrative?
3. On page 7, Orange states: “We’ve been defined by everyone else and continue to be slandered despite easy-to-look-up-on-the-internet facts about the realities of our histories and current state as a people.” How do the characters in *There There* resist the simplification and flattening of their cultural identity?

4. Tony Loneman's perspective both opens and closes *There There*. Why do you think Orange made this choice for the narrative? What does Loneman's perspective reveal about the "Urban Indian" identity? About the landscape of Oakland?

5. When readers are first introduced to Dene Oxendene, we learn of his impulse to tag various spots around the city. How did you interpret this act? How does graffiti culture work to recontextualize public spaces?

6. On page 58, Opal's mother tells her that she needs to honor her people "by living right, by telling our stories. [That] the world was made of stories, nothing else, and stories about stories." How does storytelling allow for diverse narratives to emerge? What is the relationship between storytelling and historical memory?

7. On page 77, Edwin Black asserts, "The problem with Indigenous art in general is that it's stuck in the past." Which characters seek to find a balance between honoring the past and looking toward the future? When is the attempt to do so successful?

8. How is femininity depicted in *There There*? What roles do the female characters assume in their community? Within their families?

9. What was the most surprising element of the novel to you? What was its moment of greatest impact?