

## HOW TO START YOUR OWN BOOK CLUB

Think it would be hard to start your own book club? Think again!  
All you need are some friends who are as excited about  
the books they read as you are and a little bit of organization.

### HERE ARE A FEW TIPS TO GET YOU STARTED:

**The best way to find people to be in your book club is to ask your friends.**

Think of all the people you know who like to read, and ask them to join. If you still don't feel like you have enough people, ask each of your friends to bring someone else. You can usually get a good discussion going with 6–8 people, but any number that is comfortable for you will work. If you're having trouble finding enough cool people to form your club, check with your school, local library, or bookstore to see if there's a group that you can join.

**Figure out when and where you want to meet.**

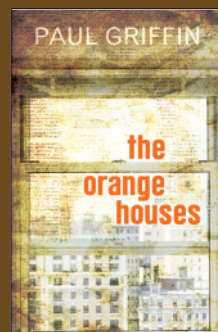
Some groups meet once a month, some meet every other month. You could get together at someone's house, in a park, on the beach, or in your school's library. If it sounds too official and overwhelming to decide all the “wheres” and “whens” right now, don't worry! It's YOUR group so YOU get to make all the decisions. All you have to do is get together once, and you can work out the rest of the details later.

**Decide how you will choose books, and how the discussions will be run.**

Maybe you have a favorite author that you and your friends would like to focus on. Or maybe you want to take turns picking your favorite book. Maybe one person likes to talk and would like to lead the discussion, or maybe you would rather just get together and talk about the books you are reading. If you get stuck, you can often find discussion questions online (try the publisher's website) or at your local library or bookstore.

**The most important thing to remember is that there's no right or wrong way to have a book club. Do what you're comfortable with and always have fun, and your group will be a success!**

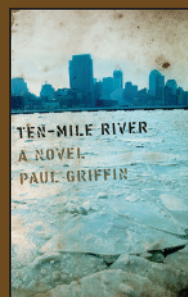
For more discussion guides to get your group going, visit  
[www.penguin.com/teachersandlibrarians](http://www.penguin.com/teachersandlibrarians)



### The Orange Houses

ISBN: 978-08037-3346-6 • \$16.99 • Ages 10 & up

Also available by Paul Griffin



### Ten Mile River

978-0-8037-3284-1 • \$16.99

Praise for *Ten Mile River*:

★ “A striking debut.”—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

“Gorgeous writing. Griffin has a particular gift for dialogue that not only sounds authentic but also serves to define characters whom he knows inside out. His is clearly a talent to watch.”—*Booklist*

“Compelling, well-articulated reality.” —*The San Francisco Chronicle*

“An urgent read.”—*VOYA*



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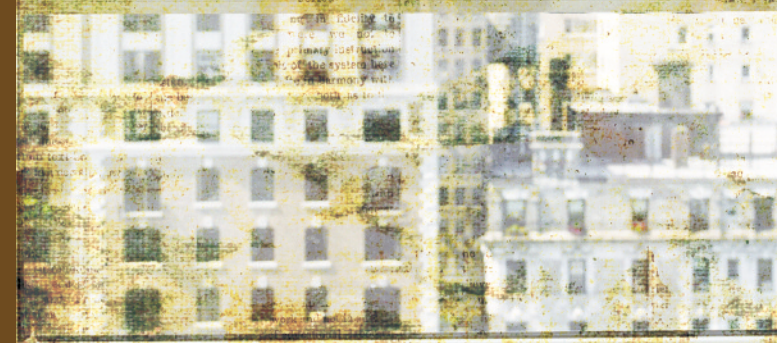
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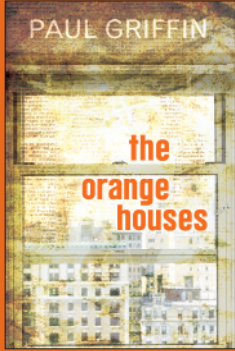
## DISCUSSION GUIDE

# PAUL GRIFFIN

## the orange houses



## ABOUT THE BOOK



Fifteen-year-old Tamika Sykes makes pen and ink drawings of her own version of the world and turns down her hearing aids to tune everyone else out. Even though Fatima Espérer has lived through horrors in her sixteen years, she creates splendid angels and creatures with her magic paper folding skills. Jimmi Sixes, a war veteran at eighteen, an addict and slam poet, brings Mik and Fatima together to create something beautiful in their urban neighborhood. None of them know that the convergence of their lives begins a twenty-seven-day countdown to tragedy. Paul Griffin chronicles the truths of three individuals in a compelling story of friendship and pain, heroism and vigilantism, beauty and terror.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Paul Griffin taught conflict resolution in at-risk high schools and juvenile detention centers throughout New York City. He has written one other young adult novel, the critically acclaimed *Ten Mile River*, and he lives just across the river from the neighborhood featured in *The Orange Houses*.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What was it like to read this story knowing that a hanging was coming up? How did the author build suspense even though you knew that something terrible was going to happen?
- What did you think about Mik, Fatima, and Jimmi? What did you think about Shanelle, Jaekwon, and The G? Would you be friends with any of these characters?
- Is anyone a hero in this story? Who and why? Or, why not? What is heroism? Is anyone a victim in this story? Explain.

- What is Jimmi's *If* game? How does it help him? What is your *If*?
- What does this book say about illegal immigration? War?
- Fatima tells NaNa that she is not Muslim and not Christian, but human (page 40). What do you think this means?
- Mik says she “hated people feeling sorry for her, but liked to feel sorry for other folks” on page 45. What does she mean? What do you think about this idea? Did you feel sorry for anyone in this book?
- Why does Mik feel uncertain about having the operation or getting better aids to help her hear better? Do you understand her reasons? Do you agree? Why does she change her mind at the end and turn on her new hearing aids? How does Mik change from the beginning to the end of the story?
- When Jimmi leaves Mik and NaNa instead of letting them take him back to the hospital, NaNa tells Mik, “Only he can stop him” (page 103). What does she mean? Do you agree? Explain. Do you think they should have tried to make Jimmi go back to the hospital? Is there ever a reason a friend or relative should try to take care of someone against their own wishes? Explain.
- What do you think motivated Shanelle to be angry at Mik? Why do you think Shanelle had a posse? Is there anything that would help Shanelle? Explain.
- Why did NaNa and Drine have different opinions of Jimmi? What's the difference between saying and knowing, as NaNa talks about on page 123?
- What is a vigilante? What do you think about what the neighborhood people did to Jimmi? Would it have made a difference if Jimmi had done what the television news reported? Explain.
- Fatima's mother told her daughters that “This is nothing, what will happen next. This is nothing” when she led the men away to keep her children safe (page 56). Fatima says the same thing to Drine when she is about to be sent back to the refugee camps (page 138). What did they each mean? Why did they say this?

- Why did Jimmi get beaten up? Why did Fatima get detained by immigration officials? Who do you blame for what happened in this story? Was there anything that one or more of the characters could have done differently that could have changed the course of the events in this book? Explain.
- Do you think the United States is a lovely country? Is it peaceful? Why or why not?
- Fatima says that Jimmi meant friendship is the most beautiful thing in the world (page 141). What do you think about this idea? What is true friendship? On the same page, Fatima also talks about what a person needs. Do you agree with her short list? What would you say a person needs? What is the difference between need and want?
- Could this story have taken place somewhere else besides an inner-city housing project? Why or why not?
- What does this story say about people making assumptions? Does this story make you rethink your assumptions about someone you know? Explain.
- What do you think happens to Mik? Fatima? Jimmi? Shanelle? What are they each doing in ten years?
- What will you remember from this book? Would you recommend it to others? What would you tell them about it?