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Johnston Public Library Book Discussion Questions

Queen of the Road by Doreen Orion

Summary

A pampered Long Island princess hits the road in a converted bus with her wilderness-loving husband, travels the country for one year, and brings it all hilariously to life in this offbeat and romantic memoir.

Doreen and Tim are married psychiatrists with a twist: She's a self-proclaimed Long Island princess, grouchy couch potato, and shoe addict. He's an affable, though driven, outdoorsman. When Tim suggests "chucking it all" to travel cross-country in a converted bus, Doreen asks, "Why can't you be like a normal husband in a midlife crisis and have an affair or buy a Corvette?" But she soon shocks them both, agreeing to set forth with their sixty-pound dog, two querulous cats—and no agenda—in a 340-square-foot bus.

Discussion Questions

1. What would you do if you could take a year off? How do you think it might change you? Is there a life lesson you'd want to learn? Is it hard to incorporate lessons learned while traveling or on vacation into your daily life? What could you do to improve that disconnect?
2. How would it be to spend 24/7 with your significant other for a year? Would a life on the road appeal to one of you more than the other? Why?
3. Doreen said she would "never, ever, EVER live on a bus." She said the same thing about going to a nudist RV park. Are there things you thought you'd never do in your life, but ending up doing, anyway? How did they work out? Are there things you're certain you'll never do now? Why?
4. Are there any "things" you feel you couldn't live without? Why? Did Doreen's changing relationship with material possessions make you feel any differently about your own?
5. Discuss how Tim's experiences growing up may have contributed to his "working himself to death" and thus became the catalyst for the whole "bus thing."
6. Doreen says she and Tim are "polar opposites." How does that affect their relationship for better or worse? What do you think each sees in the other?

7. How did Doreen and Tim change during their trip and how did you see that change progress throughout the journey? Do you feel their relationship changed as well? What do you envision their future life will be like and how is that different than if they'd never done the bus thing?
8. Who do you think is the most inspirational person Doreen and Tim met or learned about on their trip? Did he or she make you think about doing something differently in your own life?
9. Did the book make you want to visit any particular place in it? Why?
10. The bus seemed to have a "will of its own." How did Doreen and Tim's relationship with it change during their year-long adventure? What was the significance for each of them of the challenges it presented along the way?
11. Did your perception of psychiatrists change through reading this book? How did this memoir about married psychiatrists differ in its portrayal of the profession from that of pop culture movies and TV shows?
12. Why do you think Doreen included her martini recipes in the book? What did the recipes represent for her? What self-soothing traditions have you experienced in your own life?
13. Doreen writes of their dog, "Miles was all about simple pleasures: It was enough in life to have a bowl of food and a small, quiet place to himself, surrounded by people who loved him. Why ask for anything more?" And, that he could "teach me a lot." What have you learned or what do you think you could learn from your pets?
14. The bus thing seems to have given the lives of all the travelers more balance. How do you think their future plans reflect this? Are you happy with the balance in your life and if not, what could you do differently?
15. Doreen "self-coronates" on their return. Do you think she deserved the promotion from Princess to Queen? What experiences during their year especially contributed to her elevated royal status? What obstacles have you overcome that you are most proud of?

Summary and Discussion Questions from book