

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Some early readers of the novel have observed that viewing the world through a dog's eyes makes for a greater appreciation of being human. Why do you think this is?
2. Enzo's observations throughout the novel provide insight into his world view. For example:
"The visible becomes inevitable."
"Understanding the truth is simple. Allowing oneself to experience it, is often terrifically difficult."
"No race has ever been won in the first corner; many races have been lost there."
How does his philosophy apply to real life?
3. "That which you manifest is before you," is repeated several times in the novel. What is the importance of this statement to Denny, Enzo, and to us as readers?
4. When Eve dates and marries Denny, Enzo resents her presence. What other emotions do you observe Enzo experiencing? Do you believe that dogs are capable of feelings such as jealousy?
5. In the book's darkest moments, one of Zoe's stuffed animals -- the zebra -- comes to life and threatens him. What does the zebra symbolize?
6. Can you imagine the novel being told from Denny's point of view? How would it make the story different?
7. In the first chapter, Enzo says: *"It's what's inside that's important. The soul. And my soul is very human."* How does Enzo's situation--a human soul trapped in a dog's body--influence his opinions about what he sees around him? How do you feel about the ideas of reincarnation and karma as

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- Enzo defines them?
8. Do you find yourself looking at your own dog differently after reading this novel? Did this book change any of your opinions about dogs?
 9. At the beginning of the book, Enzo assumes that race car drivers need to be selfish to succeed. He comes to realize just the opposite, that in order to succeed a driver must be selfless. Why is it important for a race car driver to shed his ego in order to be successful?
 10. In the book, we get glimpses into the mindset and mentality of a race car driver. What parallels can you think of between the art of racing and the art of living?
 11. Discuss the motivation of "the twins" to gain custody of Zoe? Is there any justification to their actions?
 12. The character of Ayrton Senna, as he is presented in the book, is heroic, almost a mythic figure. Why do you think this character resonates so strongly for Denny?
 13. Why does Annika lie and accuse Denny of molesting her? What changes her mind to tell the truth?
 14. What was your favorite Enzo story? Did his habits remind you of dogs you have known or owned?
 15. Why is it that we are willing as a society to put our animals out of their misery by humanely euthanizing them, but hesitate to help sick and dying human beings? Euthanasia is illegal for humans, but not for animals. What do you think about this? Should people and animals have to die 'naturally'?



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (cont'd)

even though they are suffering?

16. When Ayrton Senna dies, Enzo believes that Senna's soul "had done what it came to do, learned what it came to learn, and then was free to leave." What is your opinion of this belief?

17. It has been said that animals mirror our society. What does this story of Enzo tell us about America today?

18. Enzo's wisdom is printed on pages 4 to 6 of this booklet. Discuss the meaning of any of these quotes.

19. Share some examples of how an animal has made a positive impact on your life or on someone you know.

IF YOU LIKED *The Art of Racing in the Rain* TRY:

Available through the libraries in Genesee, Orleans, and Wyoming Counties:

Fiction:

Sight Hound by Pam Houston

Rae, a playwright, copes with the looming death from cancer of her wolfhound, Dante, and reflects on her life, in a novel narrated by many of the people (and animals) that are important to her and Dante.

Dog On It by Spencer Quinn

Intrepid canine detective Chet accompanies his human police officer partner, Bernie, on a first assignment involving the disappearance of a teenage girl who ran with the wrong



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crowd, a case that is complicated by Bernie's dysfunctional personal life.

Now and Then by Jacqueline Sheehan

Her life spinning out of control to the point that she wakes up one day among her Irish ancestors in 1844, Anna struggles to find her way home while navigating a time and culture completely foreign to her, a situation that is further complicated by her troubled teenage nephew. Throw in loyal Irish wolfhound Madigan, and you've got an altogether enjoyable adventure novel.



The Story of Edgar Sawtelle by David Wroblewski

This novel blends Hamlet with a detailed reflection on the bonds between humans and dogs, in a nuanced portrayal of love, duty, and betrayal on a Wisconsin dog farm. Some parts of the story are told from a dog's point of view, though this technique is handled differently from Garth Stein's approach.

Nonfiction:

How Dogs Think - Understanding the Canine Mind by Stanley Coren

Coren provides a picture of the way dogs interpret their world and their owners, how they solve problems, learn, and take in new information. See through a dog's eyes, hear through his ears, and even sense the world through a dog's nose.





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***Animals in Translation: Using the Mysteries of Autism to Decode Animal Behavior* by Temple Grandin**

Grandin, an animal behavior expert, is autistic, and she contends that animals resemble autistic people in that they think visually rather than linguistically and perceive the world as a jumble of mesmerizing details rather than a coherent whole. This is a lively and absorbing look at the world from animals' point of view. Also by author, *Animals Make Us Human*.

***Marley and Me* by John Grogan**

The heartwarming and unforgettable story of a family in the making and the wondrously neurotic Labrador retriever who taught them what really matters in life.

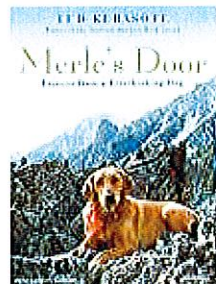


***A Good Dog: The Story of Orson, Who Changed My Life* by Jon Katz**

A Good Dog recounts the ways in which an intense border collie named Orson and a dog owner named Jon Katz became intertwined in each other's lives.

***Merle's Door* by Ted Kerasote**

Nature writer Kerasote adopts a stray dog on a camping trip, and describes his thirteen years with Merle, interspersed with the studies on animal behavior and consciousness that allowed Kerasote to see Merle as a friend instead of a pet.



***Travels with Charley* by John Steinbeck**

With Charley, his French poodle, Steinbeck drives the interstates and the country roads, dines with truckers, encounters bears at Yellowstone and old friends in San Francisco.