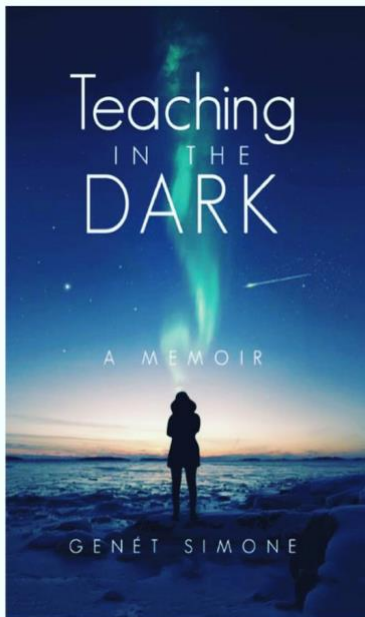


TEACHING IN THE DARK BOOK CLUB KIT

Thank you for choosing *Teaching in the Dark* for your book club!

Here are some treats to help your meeting be even more fun and insightful.



“It’s shocking how life feels so fluid here, harmonious and free—yet, at school, that freedom is precisely what we intentionally try to control with our clocks and our rules. Don’t we know, Mother Nature has no curfew? There is a peace curling its tendrils into me; it’s palpable and cracking open my mind, releasing a self-imposed pressure in my head that I didn’t know was there. I am growing new senses.”

I want to tell my students about the shifting going on inside of me, but it’s not yet clear what it’s about. I am not sure how to reconcile where I am and where I’m from. I’m not sure what to still carry with me.”

~ From Ch 15, *Paradox*

- See the next page for a list of helpful **questions** to kick-start your discussion + instructions for a book club “Pilot bread Throwdown”!
- Join my Facebook Fan Club for **Book Bonuses**: Fun Facts & Arctic Trivia, photos, and more!



QR Code for

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TEACHING IN THE DARK Discussion Questions

Use the last page to write your own discussion questions. Send them to me via my website and/or join the Teaching in the Dark Fan Club on Facebook.
~ Thank you!

www.genetsimone.com

[Facebook Fan Club](#)

1. Describe a time in your life when you were faced with a total surprise in circumstances, particularly in a certain location. What happened and how did you handle it?
2. What's your self-talk when you think people are watching you with curiosity or judgment?
3. Describe an experience you've had of being someplace new (like another country), and not knowing the protocols. What was that like for you? Give an example.
4. What is the coldest temperature you've ever experienced?
5. On page 73, Genét writes, "There were treasures here if I looked hard enough." What does she mean by that? What other instances in the story offer up "treasures" to her, literally and figuratively?
6. In Chapter 13, "First Day of School," the author is confronted with a question that stops her in her tracks: "Are you prejudiced?" Discuss how she handled that situation and how you might have done the same or something different.
7. In Chapter 15 (Paradox), chapter 21 (Me, Not Me), and elsewhere, Genét struggles to make sense of what she is supposed to teach. In what ways did her teacher education prepare her for her experiences in the village, and what kinds of courses might have prepared her better? (It's fun to come up with some names.)
8. On page 149, Genét references her own high school years, and suggests a connection between who she was then versus who she was in Shishmaref. Her "sense of self" was shifting. Looking back on your high school years, what elements of you are the same now, versus how are you different? How did your teen years impact the next phase in your life?

9. In chapter 27, Genét recounts her journey into teaching, starting with her middle school teacher. Have you had a teacher in your life who had that kind of impact? Describe who it was and what they did. Can you reach out to that person to thank them? (Genét did this with her 5th-grade teacher and wrote about it her blog, "[We Were Made for These Times](#)")
10. Chapter 27, continued: Are YOU a teacher? If so, would you describe yourself as having "a call" to educate others? What has been your journey into the profession, and what has kept you there?
11. Numerous times in *Teaching in the Dark*, Genét catches glimpses of her students' true personalities when they are not in school (Ch 37, Interim; Ch 19, Northern Lights News; Ch 55, Turning Point). What does she witness, and how do those instances impact her relationships with them in the classroom or otherwise?
12. On page 241, Genét writes, "I felt a wave of dizziness and grasped the railing to steady myself. It was followed by a strange sensation that raced through my chest and out the top of my head, like an electric current turning on a new level of awareness." A word appears: "Generosity." How does that brief encounter resonate with the book's cover and Genét's desire to honor the people in the village?
13. Several places in the book, Genét describes experiencing a sense of "here/not here," a blurring of reality: on the beach (pages 154-55), upon waking one morning (page 237), on a snowy walk (page 331), etc. Have you ever had that kind of experience in nature or elsewhere? What do you think causes it?
14. On page 238 (and elsewhere), Genét experiences something "opening" or "releasing" inside herself. What do you think that is?
15. The more time Genét spends on the island, the more she comes to face with being a representative of a culture (i.e., White) that has been decimating Shishmaref and other Native communities. In what ways does she try to reconcile that cultural clash? Could she have done more to lessen her angst or improve life on the island for the people living there?
16. There are multiple times when Genét realizes how vital other teachers are to her livelihood and sanity. What are some of those instances? What could she have done to cultivate them more?
17. After reading *Teaching in the Dark*, do you have a new-found sense of the life of a teacher? Has your perspective changed about their role, responsibilities, expectations, and/or preparation and ongoing support?

18. Several chapters detail Genét's travels by bush plane (Ch 1 The Surprise; Ch 30, Future Problems; Ch 36, Through the Burlled Arch; Ch 53, Looking Into Tomorrow; Ch 60, Letting Go). In what ways were her experiences similar to or different from ones you've had with traveling into remote areas?
19. Throughout the book, Genét describes teaching in different ways, like "an unending series of glances (p. 100), being lowered into a cave without a headlamp (page 128), like a puzzle with no picture (page 246). Chapter 60 offers a number of ways that teachers are like bush pilots. How would you describe teaching? Finish the sentence, "Teaching is like ..." or Teachers are like ..."
20. Chapter 35, Damp vs Dry, tells of Genét's sudden awareness that Shishmaref didn't allow alcohol. She struggles with that reality and starts looking for ways to circumvent the rules. Have you ever been in a situation when you wanted something but weren't allowed to have it (by law)? What did you do? Would you have acted like Genét?
21. Why do you think chapter 55 is titled "Turning Point"?
22. Study the book's cover image. Which chapters or scenes speak to the elements on the cover? Can you think of another cover image the author could have used?
23. If you had to travel for an undisclosed amount of time to the Arctic, which two books would you bring, and why?
24. You know the saying, "Hindsight is 20/20"? We often see things more clearly when we've had time to reflect. After reading Teaching in the Dark and learning about all of the challenges Genét faced as a new teacher in a distant place, do you think she should have accepted the job in the first place? And do you think she should have accepted the district's offer for another year?

Your own questions:

Pilot Bread Throwdown!



In Chapter 17, Duncan introduces Genét to Pilot Bread. She's intrigued and begins her own relationship with the hard but tasty crackers. In Chapter 18, she lists possible toppings: "... plain butter, peanut butter and honey, peanut butter and jam, maybe even peanut butter and butter ... Pilot bread Pizza?"

What kinds of toppings can your group devise?

Use the Pilot Bread recipe below or buy a box at your neighborhood grocery store. Share photos on Instagram (tag me: #genet_simone) or email a photo to me to post on my website: genet@genetsimone.com

Recipe for Hardtack Pilot Crackers

Source: Recipes.net

Prep: 15 minutes

Cook: 30 minutes

Yield: 48 pieces

Ingredients

2 cups all-purpose flour & some for rolling out the crackers
1-1/2 tsp brown sugar
1-1/2 tsp salt
¾ cup milk
2 tbsp butter, unsalted



Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F.
2. Line a baking sheet with parchment.
3. Combine the flour, brown sugar, and salt in a medium bowl, and mix.
4. Make a well in the center and add the milk and butter.
5. Stir with a fork until a dough forms. Turn out on a lightly floured work surface.
6. Roll out to a ½- to ¾-inch thickness and cut into bite-size squares or pieces.
7. Stick a fork down into the top but not through the crackers, and place forked side up on the prepared baking sheet.
8. Bake for 20 to 30 minutes until golden brown and firm.

A Brief History of Pilot Bread: The precursor of Pilot Bread was "hardtack," an amazingly robust alternative to bread that sailors added to their stores on long voyages. It was easy to make and didn't go moldy, although it could get so hard as to "shatter teeth" if a sailor didn't first dunk it in some porridge or ale. The person credited with baking America's first version in 1792 was John Pearson of Newburyport, Massachusetts. In 1890 his bakery became a part of the National Biscuit Company, known today as Nabisco (1890). Source: Alaska Runs on Pilot Bread