FREE SAMPLE

The Mystery & Thriller Book Club Questions Pack

Discussion cards for the books that lie to you fairly - 56 cards, 272 questions

Free sample - two real pages from the pack: The Host's Quick-Start (pack p. 3) and The Unreliable Narrator Audit, Set 1 (pack p. 9). The full pack is 30 pages: 56 discussion cards and 272 original questions, a spoiler charter, a scorecard and printable Suspect Board and Clue Ledger sheets.

Print at 100% on US Letter or A4.

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The Host’s Quick-Start

A thriller discussion night in five moves

Before the night: pick two themed sets that match this book (a domestic-suspense book wants Unreliable Narrator + Trust Shifts; a police procedural wants Clues & Method + Suspect Board). Print those two pages, one Anywhere Deck page, scorecards for everyone, and the Session Planner. That is the whole print job.

• Move 1 — Set the spoiler line (2 minutes). Before any book talk, run the Finished-the-Book? check from the Spoiler Charter (p. 4): who finished, who stopped partway and where, who is riding on a reread or an adaptation. Say the horizon out loud: “Tonight, everything up to the end of this book is fair game; nothing past it until I open the gate.” Two minutes now saves the whole night.

• Move 2 — Open with a card anyone can answer (10 minutes). Play one Anywhere Deck card or a gentle Lightning opener. First questions must be opinion-only — no memory tests, no plot recall — so the person who finished at 1 a.m. and the person who finished in June are equal at the table.

• Move 3 — Spend the middle on the book’s engine (30–60 minutes). Work your two chosen sets, two or three cards each. Follow the heat: if the narrator’s lies catch fire, stay in Unreliable Narrator and let Pacing wait for next month. You are hosting, not invigilating — an unfinished set is a success if the room is loud.

• Move 4 — Put the suspect board on the table (10 minutes). Play one Suspect Board card with the printable board (p. 27) in front of the room. Appoint counsel for the least-likely suspect — ideally the member who trusts them most — and let them argue the defence properly. This is the ten minutes members describe to friends who then join the club.

• Move 5 — Close with scores, the vote, and lightning (10–15 minutes). Scorecards out (p. 25): sixty seconds of silent scoring, then the averages go on the Scores & Vote page (p. 26) — where the club also decides tonight, in writing, what subgenre it wants next. Then end loud: a Lightning Round (p. 23), first answer counts, nobody’s dignity survives intact.

Timing plans: 60-minute night — 8 minutes of arrival and settling, then Moves 1 (2), 2 (10), one set in Move 3 (30), skip Move 4, Move 5 (10). Total: 60. 90-minute night — 8 arrival, Moves 1 (2), 2 (10), both sets in Move 3 (50), Move 4 (10), Move 5 (10). Total: 90. 2-hour finale night (series end) — 10 arrival, Moves 1 (2), 2 (10), Move 3 (60, all three sets), Move 4 (10), Move 5 (15), Subgenre Mode (p. 6) discussion (10), 3 minutes of overrun buffer. Total: 120.

The host’s kit: the printed card pages · scorecards + pens · the Session Planner · one copy of the book itself, for settling “page beats memory” disputes · the Suspect Board and Clue Ledger sheets · a mug or hat for Lightning strips.

You do not need to arrive with opinions ready. You need cards. The room will bring the opinions.

The Unreliable Narrator Audit

Set 1 · Cards N1–N4

The signature set: who is lying, how, and whether the lie was fair.

N1 — The Narrator on Trial

Best moment: opener, any unreliable-narrator book.

1. In one sentence, what does this narrator want you to believe that the book itself does not?
2. At what point did your trust first wobble — feelings and page range only, no reveals until the gate opens? *
3. Which small detail — a skipped morning, a too-neat memory, a name never used — first made you suspicious?
4. If the narrator told the whole truth on page one, would there still be a book? What would it be about instead?

N2 — What They Didn’t Say

Best moment: core.

1. List three things the narrator never mentions. Which omission is innocent, which is load-bearing, which is the lie?
2. Does the narrator lie by inventing, by omitting, or by letting you assume? Which kind is hardest to forgive? *
3. Find a scene where the narrator’s silence does more work than their speech. Read ten lines aloud.
4. Who in the book knows the narrator is unreliable — and why don’t they say so?

N3 — Memory vs. Fact

Best moment: core.

1. Whose memory does the book treat as evidence, and whose as weather? What decides the difference?
2. The memory test: does the narrator misremember in ways that help them, hurt them, or both? Score it. *
3. Which “remembered” scene would change completely if a second character told it? Tell it that way, in two minutes.
4. Does the book ever show you the same event twice, differently? What changed in the retelling — and who benefits from version two?

N4 — Second Read

Best moment: closer / deep cut.

1. Knowing the ending, which early scene now reads as a confession? Name the line.
2. Is this narrator unreliable, mentally unwell, deliberately deceptive, or simply telling their own truth? The table votes — then defends the minority view. *
3. Would you trust this narrator with anything smaller than a murder — a lift, a secret, a recipe? Where is your line?
4. The reread question: which earlier scene do you now need to read again with the ending in hand?

Host notes: Play this set first on any domestic-suspense or psychological-thriller night; it needs no plot knowledge beyond the narrator’s voice, so partway readers can fully join in. Arguments usually start at N3 Q2 — that’s the design, let it run. Quiet-room rescue: drop to one word. “Trusted or not, one word, go.”