



***There There* by Tommy Orange**
Discussion Friday, 15 November at 10:00 am.

1. The prologue of *There There* provides a historical overview of how Native populations were systematically stripped of their identity, their rights, their land, and, in some cases, their very existence by colonialist forces in America. How did reading this section make you feel? How does the prologue set the tone for the reader?
2. Discuss the development of the “Urban Indian” identity and ownership of that label. How does it relate to the push for assimilation by the United States government? How do the characters in *There There* navigate this modern form of identity alongside their ancestral roots?
3. “We stayed because the city sounds like a war, and you can’t leave a war once you’ve been, you can only keep it at bay.” In what ways does the historical precedent for violent removal of Native populations filter into the modern era? How does violence—both internal and external—appear throughout the narrative?
4. “We’ve been defined by everyone else and continue to be slandered despite easy-to-look-up-on-the-internet facts about the realities of our histories and current state as a people.” Discuss this statement in relation to how Native populations have been defined in popular culture. How do the characters in *There There* resist the

simplification and flattening of their cultural identity? Relate the idea of preserving cultural identity to Dene Oxendene's storytelling mission.

5. Tony Loneman's perspective both opens and closes *There There*. Why do you think Orange made this choice for the narrative? What does Loneman's perspective reveal about the "Urban Indian" identity? About the landscape of Oakland?

6. When readers are first introduced to Dene Oxendene, we learn of his impulse to tag various spots around the city. How did you interpret this act? How does graffiti culture work to recontextualize public spaces?

7. Discuss the interaction between Opal Viola Victoria Bear Shield and Two Shoes that occurs on pages 50–52. How does Opal view Two Shoes's "Indianness"? What is the import of the Teddy Roosevelt anecdote that he shares with her? How does this relate to the overall theme of narrative and authenticity that occurs throughout *There There*?

8. Describe the resettlement efforts at Alcatraz. What are the goals for inhabiting this land? What vision does Opal and Jacquie's mother have for her family in moving to Alcatraz?