

DIVIDED HOUSES

Book One of The Union Trilogy

Twelve questions on divided houses, unfinished conversations, and the cost of silence.

Best used after the group has finished the novel.

Questions are in four groups of three — feel free to use one group per session or run all twelve at once.

There are no correct answers. The novel is careful about that.

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DISCUSSION GUIDE

Twelve Questions

These questions are intended for reading groups that have finished Divided Houses. They are organized into four thematic sections. A single session can run one section deeply or move through all twelve. The novel does not resolve its tensions neatly – the best discussions probably won't either.

CHARACTER REFERENCE

Santiago DelTorro

Narrator. Austin civil litigator, constitutional sideline. Seven handicap.

Elizabeth DeFlour

Santiago's fiancée. Two years together, four months engaged. Works in PR.

Mary DeFlour

Elizabeth's mother. Sixty-two. Says important things once.

Jonathan DeFlour

Elizabeth's father. Successful, Catholic, orderly. Signs a letter in good faith.

Jack Adams

Texas Attorney General. Charcoal suit. Architect of the Alliance's legal case.

Brewster Miller

Louisiana prosecutor, Santiago's best friend from LSU. Goes slightly right under pressure.

Cotton Bridger

Data scientist, San Francisco. Single mother. Sits on the model for five months.

Anna Martinez

Unappointed Alliance leader. San Antonio. Speaks without rage.

Daniel Reyes

Federal marshal. Shot and killed at the Texas-Oklahoma border. November 13, 2028.

THE HOUSES

QUESTION 01

The opening line sets up the novel's central tension in two sentences. How does Prewitt use Santiago's distraction to establish what the book is really about?

Consider what it means that the country is "already on fire" while Santiago is watching Elizabeth walk. Is this a flaw in Santiago, or something else?

QUESTION 02

The novel is titled *Divided Houses* — plural. By the end of Book One, how many divided houses can you identify? Which division felt most personal to you as a reader?

Think beyond Santiago's engagement. The title encompasses multiple fractures.

QUESTION 03

Elizabeth brings up wanting children twice and then stops. Santiago is aware of her silence and chooses not to address it. What does this avoidance cost each of them — and who bears more of that cost?

The novel does not assign blame. Does the book ask you to?

QUESTION 04

Mary DeFlour says important things once. Trace the moments where Mary speaks directly and Santiago hears her. What does each of those moments cost her? What does she choose not to say?

Think about the December 18 scene and what Mary does — and does not do — after Elizabeth walks away.

THE COUNTRY

QUESTION 05

Jack Adams is the Texas Attorney General who built the constitutional case the Alliance runs on. Is he the book's hero, its antagonist, or something the novel deliberately refuses to resolve? What evidence supports your reading?

Consider the charcoal suit, the Newdow argument, and Adams's final speech on December 18.

QUESTION 06

Anna Martinez — the Alliance's unappointed leader — speaks without rage. Santiago finds this "the unnerving part." What does her restraint signal about the nature of the Alliance's grievance? Does the novel ask you to agree with her?

She appears only briefly, but her presence shapes everything that follows.

QUESTION 07

The federal conspiracy at the center of *Divided Houses* is documented and specific — not a theory, not a feeling. How does the precision of Cotton Bridger's data change the moral weight of the Alliance's declaration? What would be different if the evidence were ambiguous?

QUESTION 08

Santiago spends the novel becoming the man the moment requires. Does he choose this, or does it happen to him? Where is the moment you believe he stopped having a choice?

THE CONVERSATION

QUESTION 09

The novel's thesis is that houses — and countries — break through the conversations that don't happen. What conversation, had earlier, might have changed the most for Santiago personally? For the country?

You don't have to pick one. The novel may be arguing that there isn't one conversation — there's a pattern.

QUESTION 10

Brewster Miller is Santiago's oldest friend. He sees the crisis coming before Santiago does and says so — obliquely, on a golf course, while hitting his ball slightly right. Why does Santiago not hear him? Is Miller responsible for saying more clearly?

"Miller always went slightly right under pressure. It was his tell."

QUESTION 11

Jonathan DeFlour signs a Wall Street Journal letter defending a system he benefited from without knowing he benefited from it. Is his ignorance a moral defense? What does the novel suggest about complicity without knowledge?

QUESTION 12

The novel closes with Santiago's instruction to himself. Do you believe he will follow it? And — at the end of the book — do you want him to?

Consider what he is being asked to keep open, and what it costs him to try.

Tamara Prewitt is available for book club visits — in person within driving distance of Gainesville, Georgia, and by video anywhere. Contact reader@tamaraprewitt.com to arrange a session.

Silent Tables — Book Two of The Union Trilogy — is in development. Open Doors — Book Three — is coming soon. Subscribe to The Docket at tamaraprewitt.com to receive release dates and early chapters first.