

Facilitation Guide for The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates

Thank you to University of Louisville's Office of First Year Initiatives (firstyear@louisville.edu)
for sharing this guide.

It has been adapted slightly for the TCNJ audience.

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CONTEXT FOR THE SUMMER READING PROGRAM

The Cultural and Intellectual Community Program Council (CICPC) selects the annual intellectual theme and funds related programming during the academic year. Justice is the theme for CICPC sponsored programs in 2014-2015. Justice means upholding what is just; but who determines what is just? How is justice perceived and defined across time or cultures? Is justice contextually bound or does it represent a universal truth? How is justice related to notions such as fairness, equality, generosity, opportunity and love? These questions highlight that justice is not confined to the criminal justice system. It can be considered in social and economic contexts, and related to resources and sustainability. To quote Cornel West, "Justice is what love looks like in public."

To connect to the theme of justice, CICPC has selected *The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates* by Wes Moore for the summer reading program.

Wes Moore will be on campus for Community Learning Day, on Wednesday, October 8, 2014, at noon on Kendall Hall Main stage.

GOALS OF THE SUMMER READING PROGRAM

In her annual letter to the incoming first-year class, President Gitenstein highlights the importance of the Summer Reading Program. In her words,

"Your participation in our Summer Reading Program is a first step in your career at the College and should help prepare you for our challenging and engaging academic environment."

Accordingly, the Cultural and Intellectual Community Program Council adopts the following goals for the Summer Reading Program:

- To promote first year student participation in the TCNJ intellectual community by selecting a summer reading text related to the CICPC theme and Community Learning Day
- To promote critical analysis of the text by requiring students to respond in writing to assigned questions
- To model thoughtful intellectual engagement with the text through small group discussions led by a faculty/staff facilitator
- To provide students with a helpful transition to academic life as part of the Welcome Week program
- To provide students an opportunity to understand diverse perspectives

We ask that you guide the students as they engage in the first major intellectual exercise of their college careers. Your role is to model the ways that intellectuals propose questions and formulate strategies for researching those questions. Ideally facilitators and students will have more questions at the end of this discussion than they did at the beginning. Our hope is, however, that students will leave with better questions than those with which they arrived.

SCHEDULE OVERVIEW for August 25

Prior to August 25

- This year, we have added Summer Reading Program facilitators as co-instructors of FSP courses. If you go to the website canvas.tcnj.edu and login, you will see an FSP class (look for FSP-xxx, where the x's will be replaced by numbers). The course will have a class list for your discussion group and an online discussion group. Prior to the start of Welcome Week, (Thursday, August 22), the students will submit 500 word essays to the discussion group and to an assignment. They have also been requested to comment (100 words minimum) on at least two of their classmates' papers. Reading the essays and the comments should help you lead the discussion session, but you are not required to do so. You will be removed as a co-instructor from the FSP class (if you are not the FSP instructor) after the conclusion of the SRP.
- Please print out a copy of the class list (it's listed under the People link on the left side of Canvas) and bring it with you to the discussion session. Please take attendance at your session.
- The specific room and time location for your discussion session is listed in the spreadsheet (on the Summer Reading site: <http://fspfaculty.pages.tcnj.edu/summer-reading-program-resources/>). The document lists the FSP section assigned to you for the discussion. Please check that this FSP section is the same one listed on Canvas.

Facilitator lunch and Discussion Preparation

12:30 – 1:45 PM, Education 115

In this session, we will have lunch and then discuss the summer reading text.

- Update facilitators on summer reading program and how the program is working this year so you're on the same page with your students and can inform them of program updates.
- Discuss the procedures for assessing student performance
- Briefly review the following facilitation guide and answer any questions you may have about the group discussions.
- Presentations by several individuals on justice/the summer reading text followed by a discussion

Session 1

2:00 – 3:00 PM (please end exactly at 3 pm to allow for the next session to start on time)

Session 2

3:10 – 4:10 PM

*******After your session*******

E-mail your attendance form to the FSP Coordinator (fsp@tcnj.edu).

- Please record whether a student:
 - a. Did not submit an essay; and/or
 - b. Did not show up at the discussion session.
- Please indicate which students belong in which category (and which, if any, belong in both). The Liberal Learning office will follow up with these students.

Please download the Summer Reading Essays from CANVAS grade book, and e-mail the zip file to the FSP Coordinator (fsp@tcnj.edu). Please use this e-mail address if you have questions about how to download essays.

IMPORTANT GENERAL INFORMATION

If you have questions regarding the content of this guide or facilitation of this event:

- Lisa Grimm, FSP and SRP Coordinator/Associate Professor of Psychology, grimm@tcnj.edu, 609-771-2787
- Andrea Salgian, Chair of the Cultural and Intellectual Community Program Council/Associate Professor of Computer Science, salgian@tcnj.edu, 609-771-2933

If you can't reach Lisa or Andrea:

Kit Murphy, Associate Provost, murphyk@tcnj.edu, 609-771-2409

We are taking steps to make sure that rooms are unlocked for the discussion sessions.

If your assigned room is LOCKED when you arrive:

- Please try to find a custodian or faculty member first if one is available.
- If you can't find a custodian or faculty member nearby, contact Facilities (Access Control) at 609-771-2353.

If you are unable to make it to your session, please call the Liberal Learning office at 609-771-2409 as soon as possible so that we can arrange for a replacement facilitator.

TIPS for SUCCESSFUL FACILITATION

- Let your group know that you're happy to be with them and that you've been looking forward to meeting them. Share your mood and be authentic.
- Let your group know the nearest bathroom and water fountain locations, and that permission is not needed to visit either.
- Kindly request that participants turn their cell phones off and put them away.
- Pose short and simple questions, and then let the students take the discussion from there.
- Allow at least 20 seconds of silence for an answer before rephrasing or posing new question/prompt.
- Encourage participants to discuss among themselves, rather than look and speak only at you.
- Remind participants that this discussion is not a test, but rather a fun opportunity for them to share ideas and thoughts related to *The Other Wes Moore*. There is no right or wrong answer. (Some students will be nervous that they didn't finish the book so make sure there are questions that they can respond to, as well.)
- If a strong discussion becomes a conflict, refocus the discussion on the book, or guide discussion toward answering why the book elicits strong feelings, ideas, or opinions.
- All participants bring a different personality type to the discussion. Here are a few suggestions for countering different personality types:
 - The "Expert": Does anyone else have something to say about _____?
 - The "Dominant": Does anyone feel differently about _____?
 - The "Rambler": Avoid eye contact, focus on other participants, and insert a question to the others when there is a pause.
 - The "Disrupter": Remind them that we aren't asking everyone to agree, just to think critically and value others' opinions.
 - The "Shy One": Ask to hear from participants who haven't shared comments. Example: Can anyone add to _____?
 - The "Griper": Can you add something positive to _____?

EVENT OUTLINE

SETTING THE STAGE

This is likely their first college experience in the classroom, so it will help to give them an overview of what the next hour or so of discussion will look like and help them feel relaxed from the start. What are your expectations? What are the “housekeeping” details (restrooms, etc.)? Let them know if you are the class FSP instructor or if they will be seeing a different instructor later in the week.

INTRODUCTIONS

1) Start the introductions by introducing yourself.

- a. Name
- b. Where you're from
- c. TCNJ unit or department (if you teach classes, what classes do you teach?)
- d. Degree(s)
- e. One outside interest/fact

2) Have the students introduce themselves.

- a. Name
- b. Where they're from
- c. Major (if open options, ask what they're possibly interested in selecting)
- d. One outside interest/fact

This is a great opportunity to explore expectations in college- both what will be expected of them as students, as well as their expectation of what college is like. You can ask questions like:

- What do you think faculty and staff will be expecting from you in college?
- What were expectations like in your high school?
- What was challenging about writing the summer reading essay?
- What was challenging about writing the response posts?

GETTING STARTED

One way to easily get your group's discussion started (as well as warm up the group) is to share a **personal anecdote**. Keep in mind that this may be the first opportunity that some of these students have had to speak with a college faculty or staff member. Sharing a personal story can help open the students up to sharing and make you more approachable. For example, you could share about a time in your life when you had to make a decision that ultimately altered the path of your life, and how that decision has affected you (or how you believe it will affect you, if it has yet to do so). You could then relate your story to one or both of the Wes Moores, and/or ask members of the group if they would like to share.

Students wrote 500 word responses to one of three questions:

- 1) Wes Moore poses the question, "Do you think we are all just products of our environments? By comparing and contrasting the experiences of the two Wes Moores, show how they are or are not products of their environments. In what ways do you believe your environment shapes or has shaped you?"
- 2) In the stories of the two Wes Moores, can you identify where personal accountability comes into play? In what ways would it be possible for the boys to sustain a sense of personal accountability and agency?
- 3) Show how the communities of the two Wes Moores view women and men. What role do you believe fatherhood plays in their lives? How do their mothers influence their beliefs and actions?

You might find it helpful to start with these questions and then address other discussion topics that interest you. Though there are many themes and topics found in *The Other Wes Moore* that could kick start your group's discussion, we know that the very broad theme of **decision-making** is something every student can relate to. From there, you can utilize the discussion questions we have provided you, questions you have come up with, or a mix of both!

TOPICS/QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS

Student responses will help lead the direction of the discussion, but it is likely that you will need to make suggestions or refocus the conversation from time to time. The following questions/quotes/topics are suggestions for discussion. However, if your students want to explore other themes or topics from the text, please encourage them and do your best to supplement their conversation with examples from the text when needed. **We asked all students to come prepared with their favorite quote or a question, so this could also be a good time to discuss those. You'll want to be prepared with your own favorite quote too!**

Decision-making

The power of decision-making is one of the most prominent themes in *The Other Wes Moore*.

- *What decisions have you made today that could impact the rest of your life?*
- Reflect on your own experiences. *What other themes, topics, or "life lessons" from The Other Wes Moore were significant for you? Why are they significant?*

Consequences

"How could Alicia have let herself get pregnant? He thought maybe it was a mistake. Maybe the result would change. Maybe she was just reading the tests wrong." – pg. 99

- EXPLORE *the role maturity and responsibility play in engaging in a sexual relationship; the opinion some men hold that contraception is a woman's responsibility.*

Community

"This was the crew. They would work together, fight together, stay together. An unbreakable bond united the crew—for many members, it was the only support system they had. It was family." – pg. 111

- EXPLORE *the variety in family dynamics (family doesn't always have to be flesh and blood), and the different types of support they can provide.*
- *How will their ties to family or relationships with family possibly change as they are starting college?*

Economic Injustice

"My father had entered the hospital seeking help. But his face was unshaven, his clothes disheveled, his name unfamiliar, his address not in an affluent area. The hospital looked at him askance, insulted him with ridiculous questions, and basically told him to fend for himself. Now, my mother had to plan his funeral." – pg. 15

- EXPLORE *stereotyping, making assumptions, and point of view, and how they can negatively impact a situation.*

"The letter Mary was hiding explained that the federal budget for Basic Educational Opportunity Grants – or Pell Grants- was being slashed, and her grant was being terminated...Mary realized the letter effectively closed the door on her college aspirations. She had already completed sixteen hours of college credits and would get no closer toward graduation." – pg. 17

- EXPLORE *the rising costs of education in America, and the lack of resources a struggling economy can provide lower SES students.*

Support

(Wes) “My grandparents knew that I was at a crucial juncture in my life. These forks in the road can happen so fast for young boys; within months or even weeks, their journeys can take a decisive and possibly irrevocable turn. With no interventions—or the wrong intervention—they can be lost forever.” – pg. 95

- EXPLORE *the difference intervention can make in one’s life, and how factors such as financial sacrifice and lack of support can determine whether interventions happen.*

“While reading the [Johns Hopkins acceptance] letter, I thought about Paul White [Johns Hopkins admissions officer]. Having an advocate on the inside—someone who had gotten to know me and understood my story on a personal level—had obviously helped. It made me think deeply about the way privilege and preference work in the world, and how many kids who didn’t have “luck” like mine in this instance would find themselves forever outside the ring of power and prestige. So many opportunities in this country are apportioned in this arbitrary and miserly way, distributed to those who already have the benefit of a privileged legacy.” – pg. 160-61

- *Reflect on your own experiences. Have you ever been accepted, or given priority for something, because you had an inside connection? Explain.*
- *Have you ever not been accepted, or given priority for something, because someone else had an inside connection? Explain.*
- EXPLORE *that importance of making connections with faculty, staff and students at TCNJ? How could that make the difference for them when they need help? Need letters of recommendation?*
- *How did having this inside connection affect the course of Wes’s adult life?*

(The other Wes Moore) “He loved his brother, but had learned to ignore his occasional ‘do as I say, not as I do’ tirades. Tony, by contrast, was desperately trying to give his little brother information he thought he needed, the kind of information that Tony never got.” – pg. 27

- *What’s one thing you would tell a high school student just starting the college search process?*
- *How helpful have current TCNJ students or other individuals been in this transition for you? (a friend or sibling etc.)*

Environment

“When my mom first landed in the Bronx, she was just a small child, but she was a survivor and learned quickly. She studied the other kids at school like an anthropologist, trying desperately to fit in.” – pg. 8

- EXPLORE *trying to find where you fit in a new environment, which could be compared to the first year of college.*

“I was becoming too ‘rich’ for the kids from the neighborhood and too ‘poor’ for the kids at school. I had forgotten how to act naturally, thinking way too much in each situation and getting tangled in the contradictions between my two worlds.” – pg. 54

- *Reflect on your own experiences. Have you ever felt caught between two worlds?*
- *How did you reconcile your two worlds?*

“...to simply walk along the pristine Inner Harbor or go see the Orioles in action without understanding that all of Baltimore is not downtown would be...misleading. The truth is that there are two Baltimores. Almost every other major city in this country leads the same double life.” – pg. 158-59

- EXPLORE *the differences within cities, making sure to explore factors like race, socioeconomic status, education level, etc.*

“As my high school career was coming to an end, I was still being avidly recruited by college programs...I got a firsthand taste of the athletic campus visitation process, complete with young and attractive “tour guides” who showed me around and made me feel welcome—and wanted. It was a seductive ego stroke. Initially, it just reinforced my belief that I was special, that I was chosen. The young female admirers who

seemed to come along with the package added to the allure. But eventually, all of those treats started to feel meaningless.” – pg. 130

- EXPLORE *the treatment given to student athletes and other college student subcultures. Discuss whether there are unique expectations placed on student athletes by their community.*
- *As you were going through your college selection process, how were you treated differently at different institutions? How were you able to distinguish what was the best fit? What were the most important indicators that you were looking for?*

Education

“Later in life I learned that the way many governors projected the number of beds they’d need for prison facilities was by examining the reading scores of third graders. Elected officials deduced that a strong percentage of kids reading below their grade level by third grade would be needing a secure place to stay when they got older. Considering my performance in the classroom thus far, I was well on my way to needing state-sponsored accommodations.” – pg. 54

- EXPLORE *long-term effects education (or lack thereof) can have on your life; relationship between two seemingly unrelated environments (school and prison).*

(about Mrs. Downs, Wes’s homeroom teacher) “One day she flatly told me that it didn’t matter to her if I showed up because the class ran smoother when I wasn’t there. From that moment, I understood Mrs. Downs and I had an unspoken agreement, a ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ pact that worked like a charm for both of us.” – pg. 77

- *How might Wes’s grades, behavior, etc. have been different if he would have had teachers that supported him?*
- *In college, you may be in a class that doesn’t take attendance—which is very different from the expectations from high school. How difficult do you think it may be to stay motivated? What is the teacher’s responsibility for your learning in the college classroom? What are you responsible for?*
- *Think about this situation from Mrs. Downs’ perspective. How do you see her side of the situation?*
- *What might you have done if you were Wes’s teacher?*

Responsibility

At the end of the book, Wes intentionally does not tell you what decisions are the “right” decisions: “And when I finish my story, the question that comes up the most is the one that initiated this quest: ‘What made the difference?’ And the truth is that I don’t know. The answer is elusive. ... There is no one thing that leads people to move in one direction or another. I think the best we can do is give our young people a chance to make the best decisions possible by providing them with the information and the tools and the support they need.” – pg. 179, Epilogue

- *Why do you think he leaves it up to you? If you were Wes, would you have told the readers what path to take?*
- *What do YOU think made the difference?*

Other commonly referenced themes you could discuss:

Addiction
Ambition
Defeat
Hope
Mentoring

Parental/Familial Pressure & Influence
Resources
Respect
Single Parenthood
Survival

WRAPPING UP & EVALUATION

Though everyone's experience will be different due to the variety of questions and topics your group will choose to discuss, we recommend using some of the following questions to wrap up:

- Open up the floor for general questions. Last year, we had many group leaders report their students benefitted from having a few minutes just to ask general questions related to Welcome Week, classes, etc.
- Use the prompt under **Responsibility** and ask students to identify factors that made the difference between the life experiences of the two young men.
- Use the Wes Moore quote about the importance of stories: "Learning the details of his story helped me understand my own life and choices, and I like to think that my story helped him understand his own a little more." (Introduction, pg. xiii) o If you haven't already, share your brief story of how you came to be at TCNJ.
 - *In what ways did reading the personal stories of the two Wes Moores help you begin to prepare for this transition to college? (Academic expectations? Broad themes about decision-making and power of people in your lives? Learning something about yourself?)*
- Ask participants to reflect on how they can use or apply what they have learned.

DISMISSAL

- Please remind students to complete the post discussion session survey that they will receive in an e-mail.
- Thank them for their participation and remind them that the author, Wes Moore, will be speaking at Community Learning Day on October 8 at noon in Kendall Hall Main Stage.

GRADING/ASSESSMENT

*****After your session*****

E-mail your attendance form to the FSP Coordinator (fsp@tcnj.edu).

- Please record whether a student:
 - a. Did not submit an essay; and/or
 - b. Did not show up at the discussion session.
- Please indicate which students belong in which category (and which, if any, belong in both). The Liberal Learning office will follow up with these students.

Please download the Summer Reading Essays from CANVAS grade book, and e-mail the zip file to the FSP Coordinator (fsp@tcnj.edu). Please use this e-mail address if you have questions about how to download essays.

THANK YOU!

Thank you for serving as a discussion group leader for The Other West Moore! We appreciate your support of this program and therefore, your support of first-year students at The College of New Jersey.