

Skokie Public Library's Book Discussion Guide

DREAMS FROM MY FATHER

by Barack Obama

- Describe the difficulties Obama had as a child—not fitting in with white children and fearing social "out-casts."
- Is it possible for any individual born of two ethnic origins to find a society in which he or she truly belongs? Think of recent authors who have struggled with similar issues: Amy Tan (Chinese), Jhumpa Lahiri (Indian), Louise Erdrich (Native American). Also consider the classics of African-American writers like Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* and Richard Wright's *Native Son*, Toni Morrison's *Beloved*.
- Discuss Obama's family. What about his mother—would you have liked more attention paid to her in this work? Also consider his grandparents and the role they played in his life.
- When he makes his trip to Kenya, what does he come to understand about his father—and his own heritage.
- Do you feel Obama's attitude toward the all-white culture is one of blame, acceptance, resignation? Or something else?
- Ultimately, Obama's memoir is a coming-of-age story in which a young man who straddles two cultures seeks his identity in the adult world. How—or how well—does he succeed? What conclusions does he reach?
- Talk about his work as a community social worker on Chicago's south side. What does he learn or come to realize about his role in the African-American community?



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