

Skokie Public Library's Book Discussion Guide

The Measure of a Man by Sidney Poitier

- How did Poitier's early childhood experiences define him?
- What were his first experiences with and reactions to racism?
- What was his "time of aches"? (p. 48)
- What does he mean by "my work is who I am"? (p. 69)
- Did he follow his mother's advice, "Charm them, son, into neutrality"?
- How did he experience his 'outsider status' and when did he come to terms with it?
- What is the 'true measure of a man'?
- What was the criticism of *The Defiant Ones*?
- What role does forgiveness play in his life?
- How does he feel about the African American artists who preceded him?
- How does he respond to the charge "black people – it's their own fault if they can't make it today"? (p. 127)
- Does Poitier believe that art can solve social problems? 133
- When does Poitier first feel that he is *an actor*? (p. 149)
- What event causes him to stop and take stock of the essentials of life and our legacy?
- Why does Poitier think that poverty was a good legacy for him?
- Do you agree with his statement that "we're not nearly as strong as our mothers and fathers were"?
- How did he handle the conflicts generated by his divorce?
- What were the two blessings always available to the young in the semi-primitive society in which he grew up? (p. 209) Why "blessings"?
- "Life begins in the darkness of a total ignorance..." Do you agree with this theory of human development and how we learn? (p. 211-212)
- What did he learn from his experience with cancer?
- What is your opinion of his "Nature's use-of-opposites" theory? (p. 224)
- How does he sum up his philosophy on the last page?
- Why does Poitier refer to this book as a "spiritual biography"?



Skokie Public Library

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