

THE BUDDHA AND THE BEE

Book Club & Discussion Guide

A resource for readers, discussion groups, libraries, cycling clubs, and community conversations inspired by *The Buddha and the Bee* by Cory Mortensen.

Cory Mortensen

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About the Book

The Buddha and the Bee follows Cory Mortensen on a bicycle journey across America — from Minneapolis to California — through small towns, deserts, mountains, roadside motels, diners, loneliness, humor, exhaustion, and moments of unexpected grace. Part travel memoir, part meditation on movement and reinvention, the book explores what happens when someone steps away from routine life and begins listening more closely to the road, to strangers, and to themselves.

Major Themes:

- Reinvention and uncertainty
- The meaning of freedom
- Solitude and self-reflection
- American landscapes and forgotten places
- Cycling as meditation and endurance
- Human connection and kindness from strangers
- Escaping routine and redefining success

A Note from the Author

Thank you for choosing *The Buddha and the Bee* for your discussion group. I never intended the book to be simply about cycling. It became a story about uncertainty, movement, loneliness, humor, small moments, and the strange freedom that comes from not entirely knowing where you belong. My hope is that these questions encourage conversations not just about travel, but about the roads we choose, the identities we build, and the parts of ourselves we discover when life becomes less predictable.

Discussion Questions

1. What motivated Cory to leave behind ordinary routines and ride across the country? Did you relate to that impulse?
2. Throughout the book, the journey often feels less athletic and more philosophical. Did you view the ride as an escape, a search, or something else entirely?
3. How does solitude shape the narrator's thinking during the trip? Do you think long periods alone change people?
4. The book spends significant time observing ordinary places and small towns. Why do you think these details matter?
5. Which encounter or character from the journey stayed with you most and why?
6. How does the physical challenge of cycling mirror emotional or personal challenges in the book?
7. Did the memoir change the way you think about travel?
8. The narrative often questions modern ideas of success, productivity, and stability. Did you agree with those critiques?
9. What role does uncertainty play throughout the journey? Is uncertainty something to avoid or embrace?
10. Many scenes focus on simplicity — riding, eating, sleeping, repeating. Did that simplicity feel freeing or limiting to you?
11. How important is discomfort in personal growth? Could the lessons of the book have been learned without hardship?
12. What do you think the title *The Buddha and the Bee* represents?
13. Did the memoir make you nostalgic for road trips, wandering, or slower forms of travel?
14. How does humor balance the more reflective or philosophical moments in the book?
15. At the end of the memoir, do you think Cory returns home changed? In what ways?

Ideas for Community & Book Club Conversations

Suggested Pairings for Discussion Nights:

- Share a favorite travel story or road-trip memory
- Discuss a place that unexpectedly changed your perspective
- Create a playlist inspired by the landscapes in the book
- Map the route from Minneapolis to California and discuss which section you would most want to experience
- Talk about the difference between tourism and meaningful travel
- Discuss whether movement and adventure are essential parts of a fulfilling life

For Libraries, Cycling Clubs & Reading Groups

Cory Mortensen is available for select virtual and in-person conversations related to:

- Travel writing
- Long-distance cycling
- Reinvention and midlife adventure
- Independent publishing
- Storytelling and memoir writing

For speaking inquiries and book club events:

www.corymortensen.com