

# THE OXFORD PROJECT

## Questions for a Reading Group

1. Who is your favorite person in the book and why?
2. With whom do you identify the most?
3. Look at the town where you live and describe five communities within it. Which community are you a part of? Describe and define it.
4. Bob Tandy (p23), Robin Stoker (p29), and Holly (Stopko) Poeschel (p55), all feel like outsiders in Oxford. What does it mean to be an insider or an outsider in your own community? Take a look at Don Saxton (p16) as the ultimate insider.
5. There are a lot of great expressions in the book. Which is your favorite?
6. What makes Bloom's narratives so strong? What questions do you think he asked most frequently and which do you think provided the most interesting answers?
7. Why do you think the people of Oxford confessed so many secrets, hopes, tragedies, and dreams to Bloom? Why would they tell a stranger things they never told anyone else? Bloom says there is "comfort in talking about what burdens us" (p11). Do you agree?
8. Bob Lindley describes how he's watched his brother change (p32). Do you think people are fundamentally capable of substantial change?
9. How is being part of a family the same or different from being part of a close-knit community such as a school, a church, or a town?
10. Do you agree with Shawn Smith when he says, "I hate the phrase 'Everything happens for a reason.' You work hard, and you make things happen" (p47)?
11. Life turns on a dime. Life is made up of moments. We don't know always know which are pivotal until ten, twenty years later. Tim Hennes stopped at Slim's on the way home from work one day and met Robin (p175). What are the moments that have fundamentally changed the direction of your life and did you know it at the time? Look back.
12. Shawn's views contrast sharply with some of the religious beliefs of his neighbors (p47). What role does religion play in your own community?
13. Are members in your community defined in part by their political affiliations? How does that compare to Oxford? Does education play a role? Economics? What else plays a role in the definition of your community?
14. What differences do you notice among people's regrets? Consider Bud Miller (p88) and Patty Hackathorn (p180) and Vince Grabin (p158).
15. Bloom calls Feldstein's project a "democratic" experiment (p10). What does this mean?