

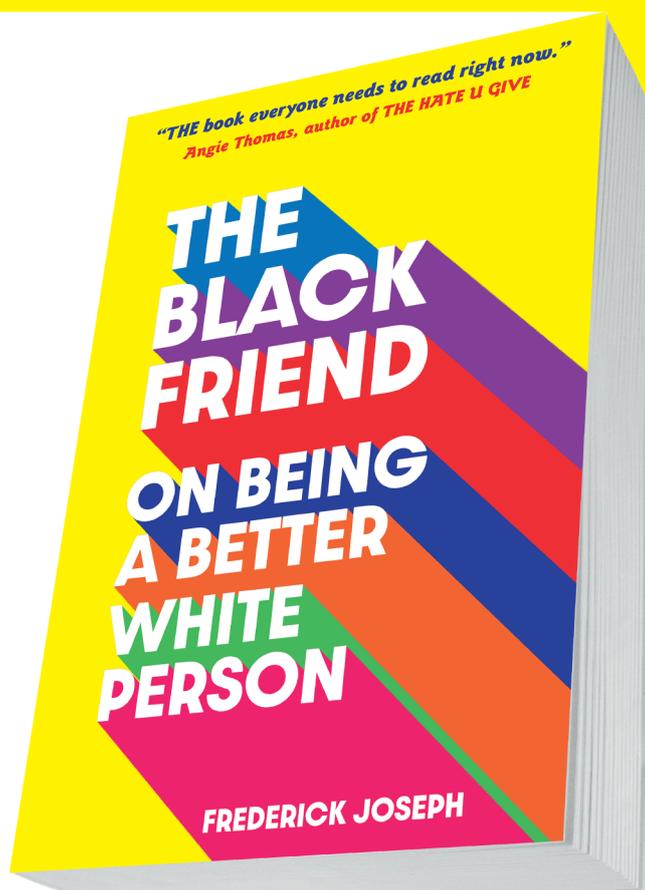
THE BLACK FRIEND: ON BEING A BETTER WHITE PERSON

FREDERICK JOSEPH

DISCUSSION GUIDE

*"THE book everyone needs
to read right now."*

*Angie Thomas, author of
THE HATE U GIVE*



9781529500615 • 12+ • £8.99

ABOUT THE BOOK

Through recounted personal experience, wide-ranging interviews, historical context and detailed explanation, *The Black Friend: On Being a Better White Person* is an essential guide for anyone hoping or wanting to better understand racism and to learn how to be better as a result. In it Frederick Joseph's painstaking honesty, warm and generous humour and relentless passion consistently push and encourage the reader towards anti-racist action, self-reflection and belief in a better, kinder world. It is a searingly important read.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Frederick Joseph is an award-winning marketing professional, media representation advocate and writer who was recently selected for the Forbes 30 Under 30 list. He created the #BlackPantherChallenge and #CaptainMarvelChallenge, philanthropic enterprises enabling disadvantaged young people to watch these groundbreaking films. He's also the winner of the 2018 Bob Clampett Humanitarian Award, given by Comic-Con International: San Diego, and was selected for the 2018 Root 100 List of Most Influential African Americans. He lives in New York City.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The topics covered in *The Black Friend* will likely invoke strong responses and emotions, many from those who have direct experience of racism, but potentially also from those who might disagree with certain elements. Before beginning to discuss the book it may be worth establishing commonly agreed boundaries that allow the group to explore systemic racism and its impact without any people of colour within the group fearing repercussion or hostility. NB: this does not require toleration of racist attitudes or actions, and it may be worth ensuring adequate support in the management of the discussion group if this is deemed to be a risk. These topics require open and honest debate, and positive, proactive actions.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

GETTING STARTED:

Before considering specific questions, ask the group how the book made them feel. Prompt, if needed, with suggestions - angry, guilty, sad, determined, etc. - but give the group members space to express themselves honestly and to feel comfortable in sharing their thoughts and feelings about the book.

1. NARRATIVE STYLE

Consider the title of the book, and the way in which Joseph has written it. How successful is directly addressing the reader in supporting Joseph's stated aims? (see Preface) Who do you think it is that the book is addressing? Discuss who Joseph wants to be 'the Black Friend' to, and why.

2. USING 'Black' AS OPPOSED TO 'black'

Joseph capitalises the 'B' in Black but not the 'w' in white. He explains that this is a personal preference in the Introduction (p.19). Why do you think this is significant? Discuss the importance of this choice, and also the importance of it being a choice, and not a direction to others.

3. WHITE PRIVILEGE

Reread the definitions of **white privilege** (p.251) and **systemic or institutional racism** (p.248) in the 'Encyclopedia of Racism' section. Discuss some of the ways in which these concepts influence society every day, and compare with Joseph's own related experiences in the book.

4. ALLIES VS ACCOMPLICES

Turn to page 211 and the section 'In the End'. Joseph asks the reader not to be an ally but to be an accomplice - "a person who knowingly, voluntarily, or intentionally gives assistance to another." Discuss the difference between being an ally and being an accomplice. Reflect on the experiences of the group, either positive or negative. What positive actions can members of the group make to become more than just allies?

5. UK VS USA

Much of the book is set in the United States, or reflects American experience and society. Revisit the interview with Toni Adenle (Toni Tone) from page 105. Discuss the ways in which racism presents differently, or not, in the UK compared to America. What about in other countries within the group's experience? Do these differences suggest anything fundamentally different about those places' attitudes and actions towards race?

6. 'MAINSTREAM', 'NORMAL' AND 'OTHERING'

Consider the significance of the normalisation of white culture, depicted across Chapter 4. What does Joseph mean when he says, "the foundation of what's 'normal' typically stretches only as far as the people and cultures in front of someone"? How has white culture become the 'norm' and in what ways can we protect different cultures from being treated as 'other' than normal.

7. CULTURAL APPROPRIATION VS APPRECIATION

Chapter 5 tackles the issues of cultural appropriation and racist stereotyping. Consider examples of cultural appropriation either from personal experience or from the news or social media, and discuss the difference between appropriation and appreciation. Where have you seen cultures being **appreciated** and shared? Where have you seen **appropriation** taking place, and what can you do to tackle this?

8. TEACHING BLACK HISTORY

Joseph references many influential people of colour and significant events of the civil rights movement, that many (not just white) audiences do not know about, or are never exposed to through school or their communities. Discuss the teaching of Black history in the UK: what can be done to better inform society of the historical events and significance of people of colour in this country? You may want to consider contrasting recent examples such as Steve McQueen's Small Axe series of films, or the recent government statement (October 2020) that teaching "white privilege" as "uncontested fact" is illegal.