

Honky  
Dalton Conley  
Reading Group Discussion Questions

Honky is an excellent candidate for a reading group. When your group finishes reading the book, here are some questions to get the conversation rolling:

1. How much do you think Conley's parents' decision to live where they did was a matter of choice and how much was it out of their control? How much choice does any family ultimately have -- black or white?
2. How would you define "race" is after reading Honky? Has your understanding changed at all?
3. If social class advantages (and disadvantages) cannot be reduced to income level or where you live, what are they about? What does Jerome's incident and/or the way the fire was handled tell us about this issue -- if anything?
4. How do you think the storyline would have been different if Conley's sister was writing the book? In other words, how much of his account has to do with his family's unique circumstances and how much has to do with his particular personality traits? What about his personality made his time on the Lower East Side more difficult than it needed to be?
5. What were the positive aspects of the Conleys' experience living where they did?
6. Do you think the Conleys had a positive impact on their neighbors, a negative effect, or a negligible impact? Do you think as a society and as a government we would be wise to encourage other white families to live in predominantly minority neighborhoods?
7. Why do you think Americans live so separately by race? What is the level of integration in your own neighborhood?
8. Which of Conley's parents reactions to the neighborhood do you think you would have been more likely to have yourself?
9. What are the similarities between Conley's neighborhood and yours?
10. Do you find fault with Conley's parents for lying about their address to the school board? Have you ever done anything like that for your best interest or for the good of your children?
11. How common do you think downward mobility is in America, and what are its most frequent causes?