

Book Group Discussion Questions

Shelter: poems by Margaret Hasse, watercolors by Sharon DeMark

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1. Shelter, according to the dictionary, is something that protects or shields. Some of the pieces in the *Shelter* book, such as “Cave,” “Hut,” and “Storm Cellar,” are about finding respite or temporary safety in times of inclement weather or exhaustion. What has sheltered you during a bout of bad weather or other danger?
2. The word shelter can connote comfort, coziness, and well-being. In “Book” and “Hug,” there is no sense of danger. People are nourished and comforted by reading and being held. How might a book or a hug seem like shelter to you?
3. During the pandemic, people have needed to isolate and find ways to keep our spirits up. “Art,” the first work in the book, is about the power of making art and having faith in the future. During the pandemic (or other challenging time), what have you done to shelter yourself and promote your well-being? How has it worked for you?
4. “House” is often top-of-mind as a shelter. According to the International Commission of Human Rights, shelter or housing, is an essential human right. Several of the poems and images in the book, such as “Church Sanctuary” and “Tent,” remind us that not all people have permanent housing. Read those poems. How do you feel about being reminded of the unsheltered among us?
5. Poet Margaret Hasse and painter Sharon DeMark each thought up half of the 30 shelters in the book. They could imagine many more. Please suggest additional shelters that would be interesting to include in a book like this.
6. The idea of collaborating on a project began as a way for two friends be creatively engaged and keep their spirits up during a difficult time. The experience was deeply satisfying for both Margaret and Sharon. If you’ve been part of a collaboration, describe how it affected you.
7. Does the interplay between the poem and the painting in each pair make the whole greater than its separate parts? Why or why not?
8. If a particular poem-painting really appeals to you, could you name the work and say why?

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