

The Tortilla Curtain by T.C. Boyle

Griffiths Leadership Society
Book Club Discussion



Perspective and Perception

Tortilla Curtain is, among other things, a novel of perspective and perception. The novel is forged on the cultural, social, and financial differences between the Mossbachers and the Rincuns.

- As we go through the book, we should ask ourselves, “What is being seen, and through whose eyes?”
- It alternates between the two couples' points of view, allowing the reader to enter the lives of both families. How does this technique propel the story?
- Do you feel that you got to know each of the couples equally well?
- Was the author fair in his portrayal of each of the couples?



Delaney

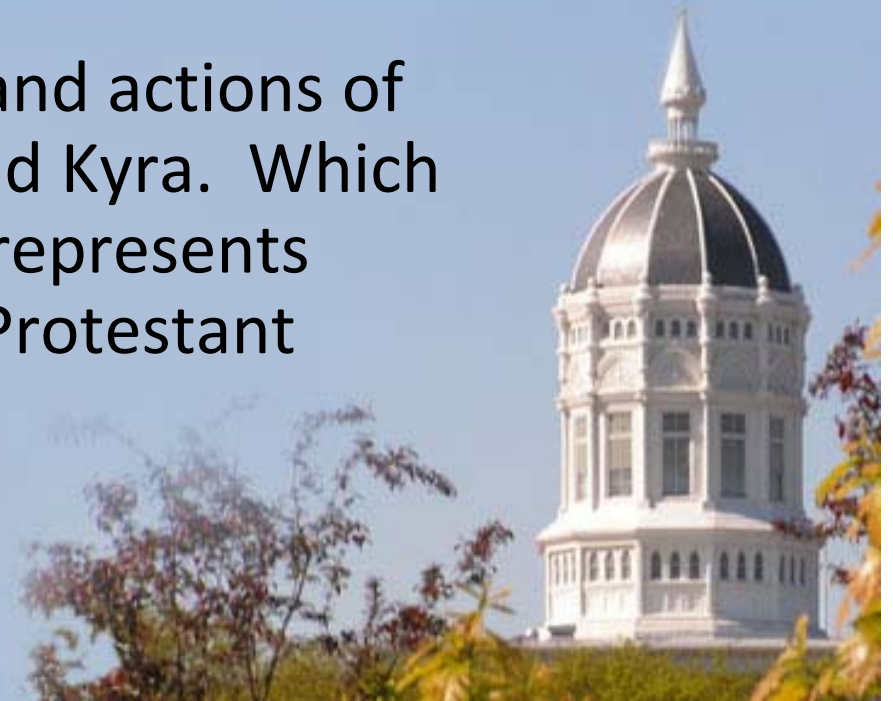
On the first page of the novel Delaney Mossbacher is described as a 'liberal humanist'.

- What do you think Boyle means by this phrase? Why is it so important to the development of the novel to introduce Delaney in this way?
- To what extent does this description still fit him by the end of the novel?
- How does Delaney strike you as a character? Strong, decisive, committed? Why or why not?
- Does he actually believe what he claims to believe?
- If he gives in to what he claims to hold true, does that mean he doesn't really believe in those values?



Realistic Characters?

- Do you think the characters in this book are realistic, particularly Delaney, Candido, America, and Kyra?
- Are they over-exaggerated stereotypes meant to satire certain cultural issues, societal standards, and human behaviors?
- Compare the daily activities and actions of Delaney, Candido, America, and Kyra. Which character do you think better represents the ideal of the “American or Protestant work ethic”?



Social Capital

The concept of social capital is the idea that by forming groups, individuals gain access to additional resources of many types (knowledge, experience, access to power, etc).

- Compare the social capital of Delaney/Kyra to Candido/America.
- What implications does the concept of social capital have for those living in a disadvantaged state, i.e. poverty, immigrants, etc?
- How much social capital do you have?



Lifestyle

- Do you think its easier to achieve or to maintain a more comfortable life style?
- Is it possible to work your way out of poverty by simply “working hard and being a good person”?
- If not, what else is needed?



Immigration

- Did *The Tortilla Curtain* help you better understand the issue of immigration and the people involved?

