

## Discussion Questions

### *On the Road* by Jack Kerouac (1957)

1. Some people argue that Dean Moriarty is the center of this novel. Do you agree? Why or why not? What does Dean represent in terms of behavior/lifestyle? Why do you think Sal admires him so much?
2. What does “the road” represent in this novel? Analyze “the road” as a symbol, and explain what it means at various points in the text.
3. What role does race play in this text? Specifically, analyze the way the text treats jazz and jazz musicians. How does Sal view jazz and jazz musicians? How might this relate to race? What connections can you make between the style and tone of the novel and the musical conventions of jazz?
4. Discuss the way the characters in *On the Road* approach masculinity. What do you think were the masculine conventions of their time? How do they conform to these conventions and how do they challenge them? Why do you think this is the case?
5. Discuss the sexuality of several characters in *On the Road*. How does their sexuality align with traditional standards of sexuality and how do they reject those standards?
6. How does the concept of “home” function in the novel? Specifically, discuss the “home” that Sal and Terry make together. Why does he choose to stay with her? Why does he choose to leave? How does Sal’s approach to “home” and “flight” compare with David’s in *Giovanni’s Room*?
7. Look at the beginning of Part III: Chapter 1, where Sal walks through the “Denver colored section, wishing I were a Negro.” Analyze Sal’s assumptions about race and class in this moment.
8. Compare and contrast a character from *On the Road* with a character from *Giovanni’s Room*. What insights can you gain from this comparison/contrast?
9. What other themes and symbols do you find to be particularly interesting and/or important in the novel? Why do these stand out, and how can we connect them to the larger theme of the novel and/or the historical moment in which the novel was written?