

# Discussion questions for "The Splendid Solution"

## Discussion Questions for Splendid Solution by Jeffrey Kluger

The following discussion questions are provided as a starting point for discussion groups. Pick those questions that you think your group would most enjoy discussing. We hope that providing multiple questions gives you enough options to engage your group in an interesting discussion.

1. How did the author's conversational style and use of dialog affect you?
2. What did you learn about scientific work that surprised, delighted or dismayed you?
3. Did this book change your opinion of F.D.R.?
4. The National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis used local volunteers as well as celebrities to raise money for the care for the victims of polio and later to search for a cure. How has involvement at the local level changed or has it stayed the same?
5. How did the author represent Albert Sabin and the "live vaccine" side of the debate?
6. Do you feel that you got to know or understand Salk? Was he a hero? Why do you think he was or was not?
7. How do you account for Salk's failure to recognize the others in his lab?
8. How do you relate the research done on polio to current debates on stem cell research or the ethical treatment of animals?
9. This book illustrated the long-term investment, cost, and pitfalls in developing a vaccine. What implications has that had for the development and production of vaccines in the U.S. in the present time?
10. Share your memories of polio and its aftermath.
11. Describe the relationship between:
  - FDR and Basil O'Connor
  - Salk and John Troan
  - Salk and Sabin
- "A scientist working on a project like polio vaccine needs to be politically astute." What does that statement mean?
- How did the book help you to understand the anxiety associated with polio, the terror when the vaccines developed by Park-Brodie and Kolmer caused sickness and death, and the jubilation when a vaccine finally worked?
- When trying to understand the spread of the disease scientists realized that it became an epidemic in the "nineteenth century - just the era when indoor bathrooms and sealed plumbing were keeping hands cleaner and sewage more contained than ever before. The counterintuitive explanation was that while the poliovirus in human waste and elsewhere could spread the disease, it could also inoculate against it." (p.89) Are we too clean today?