

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. This is a classic quest story, but what is Joe searching for, and do you think he ever truly finds it? Do you sympathize with Joe and take his quest seriously? Does he take himself seriously?
2. The narration alternates between the present and the past. How does this affect your reading experience and your interpretation of what Joe undergoes?
3. The American Dream is something many aspire to. What are Joe's thoughts on it, and how do they change during the course of the novel, if they do?
4. Who or what is the Man and what does he represent? What role does religion play in the interpretation of the Man and the novel?
5. Joe says a number of times that he's afraid. What do you think he's afraid of?

6. Compare the settings of New York and Montana. How is Joe's life in each place different and/or similar? What effect does each place have on Joe?
7. What does the book have to say about fame and the reasons why so many pursue it in this day and age?
8. Joe refers often to "stories": how they are created, as well as his own personal narrative. What role does the media play in helping create and/or destroy personal narratives or stories?
9. Joe picks up various companions throughout the book. Why are people so attracted to Joe's story?
10. Of the ranch, Joe says, "This place is not a sanctuary. Simply an odd career choice" (page 197), and at the end of the book, "My past is a shadow that I can't outrun. . . . My relief is the hope that my shadow recedes into something else. Something less than memory" (page 274). Do you think Joe has escaped his past and himself? What has he created for himself in his new life, and how does it differ from what he had before?
11. There is mention of "shedding of skin" and the concept of rebirth in the book. Has Joe been reborn, or has he merely rebranded himself?