



# Same Ground

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

An award-winning author goes looking for the meaning of family and belonging on a glorious wild-goose-chase road trip across middle America. *Same Ground* is a story about what time washes away and what persists — and what we might find, unexpectedly, if we go looking.

1

*Same Ground* is many things — a modern-day odyssey looking for roots and belonging, a portrait of contemporary heartland America, a quintessential North American road trip. Did one aspect resonate with you most? If so, which one and why?

2

Have you ever taken a crazy road trip? Where, and what has stayed with you? Did you find Wangersky's tale brought back your own impressions of the places you passed through and the people you met? We were originally a nomadic species. Do you think this is still lurking in our DNA and why road trips have such a pull for many of us?

3

Wangersky quotes his great grandfather's diary at length as he tries to match his ancestor's trail. Did you like this as a literary device? What struck you about their two voices interweaving across time? Do they connect with each other, across the years?

4

*Same Ground* does not flinch from quoting diary passages that reveal the racism against Indigenous peoples common in that time as well as the skirmishes the settlers had with Native Americans along the Trail. At other points in the book, the author highlights the racism that is still very much present against this century's wave of newcomers. What do you think of these authorial choices? Do you think they open up a discussion on casual racism? If so, what was it that worked for you?

5

The author's persona in this memoir is wry and self-deprecating, setting up this self-portrait as a foil for his razor-sharp observations. Did you find the juxtaposition of humor and social comment effective? Do you find you can "hear" his voice in his written words?

6

Wangersky is part of a family scattered by economic necessity or opportunity, like so many. He comments on how people have always been on the move for a better life but that the price for that is often lost contact and a feeling of rootlessness. His quest in this book is to find where he might come to understand what constitutes family. He finds it, finally, but not at all where he expected. Do you agree with his conclusions?

7

As the world has stretched out with easy air and car travel and with the global nature of work, the ability to relocate to far-off places and distant locations, have we lost something of what is essential in the notion of "family"? People have always travelled — but is this new separation so easy and casual that the concept of family unravels?

8

Would you leave your extended family for career or life success? How much of that cost would you be willing to bear?