

Craft and Conscience: How to Write About Social Issues, By Kavita Das
Discussion Guide

- 1) The book begins with the question “Is all writing political?” Das explains why she believes all writing is political irrespective of the intention of the writer. Do you believe all writing is political? Why or why not?
- 2) In the first chapter, Das urges you to examine your motivations for writing about a social issue. What are your motivations for writing about a social issue? What are your goals and hopes for your writing?
- 3) In chapters 2 and 3, Das discusses the relationship between the writer, reader, and their subject and the balance between context and narrative. As a reader, do you prefer writing that focuses more on context or narrative? Why? As a writer, does your writing focus more on context or narrative? Why?
- 4) Chapter 4 discusses the differences between writing from the outside in (reported perspective) and writing from the inside out (personal perspective). Which do you prefer as a reader? Which do you prefer as a writer? Why?
- 5) Das examines notions of neutrality, objectivity, and the search for the truth in writing. Do you believe neutrality and objectivity are requirements for good journalistic writing on social issues? In your mind, how are they similar to or different from searching for the truth?
- 6) Have you changed your mind about a social issue after reading an essay, a book, or an opinion piece? What was it that made you change your mind: new information, a new perspective, an emotional connection?
- 7) What steps, if any, do you take to be more culturally sensitive, in writing and in life? What are your own thoughts on cultural appropriation? Do you believe it is harmful and something that writers and artists should avoid, or do you believe they should have unfettered artistic freedom? Why?
- 8) Do you believe writing can inspire social change? Do you believe writing can have negative consequences?
- 9) What possible implications, positive or negative, are there for your own writing on social issues?
- 10) Do you believe conscience is an essential part of the craft of creative writing? Why or why not?