

## ***Out of Chaos* Discussion Guide**

Welcome to our discussion of the 2017-18 Common Read book, *Out of Chaos*.

This is a safe space for conversation. This means we will all:

- Listen to others' points of views and opinions. We will not interrupt each other.
- Speak from our own experiences instead of generalizing (for example, use "I" and "we" instead of "they" and "you").
- Participate fully, both as speakers and listeners.
- Respect others' views.
- Respect confidentiality. What is shared in this room stays in this room.

Let's begin by getting to know one another through introductions. When you introduce yourself, please share one thing you enjoyed about this year's book, *Out of Chaos*.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. After reading the book, what is your understanding of what happened at Mankato State College in the late 1960s and early 1970s? What surprised you about the story? Do you think events like this could happen again today? Why or why not?
2. In the Reflections segment of the book, *Out of Chaos*," President Nickerson shares his impressions of events that occurred on the Mankato State College campus as well as in the city of Mankato. What happened to U.S. Senator Scoop Jackson when he spoke on the Mankato campus? Do you agree or disagree with the tactic employed by the students to express their disapproval of the speaker? Do you think Nickerson's reaction to the students' actions towards the speaker was appropriate? Please explain.
3. In the Faust, Mundale, Wood, and Zuckerman segments from *Out of Chaos*, what activities took place on the Upper Campus? Which, in your opinion, were the most significant?
4. In his segment, Jerome Zuckerman, Professor of English, describes how he and his six students were in a classroom on the second floor of Armstrong analyzing the poetry of William Butler Yeats when a tear-gas canister was thrown into the first floor stairwell. What did Zuckerman and his class do? What kind of triumph did Zuckerman attribute to their actions?
5. In the Browne, Lofy, and Phelps segments from *Out of Chaos* what were some of the events that happened at the Lower Campus. Which, in your opinion, were the most significant?

6. In the Reflections section Nickerson describes two student take-overs of the Old Main administration building. Where were President Nickerson and his wife during the second take-over of Old Main? How long did students occupy the building? What actions were taken that broke the agreement between the administration and the students?
7. On page 100, Judith "Judy" Mans talks about bomb threats that occurred on the Mankato campus in the 1970s. Mans tells a story about Nickerson's office receiving a note under the door threatening a bomb threat. Because of her position as Executive Assistant to President Nickerson, Judy Mans was instructed to lock the door and stay in the office, while other staff moved to different offices. What was Mans instructed to do if a bomb came in through the window? Was this a joke or do you think it was good advice? What would you have done in this situation?
8. Dan Quillin mentions the Minnesota State College Student Association (MSCSA) on page 121. This association is now called the Minnesota State Student Association or MSSA and serves as the student government on campus. What role does student government have on a college campus? How do you think student government today differs from student government in the 1960s and 1970s?
9. Mark Halverson and Dan Quillin write about the Kent State-Jackson State Memorial on the Minnesota State University, Mankato campus. What is written on the Kent State-Jackson State Memorial stone? What do you think the Memorial slogan means? According to the readings what is buried beneath the present day Kent State-Jackson State Memorial? If you were to add a memorial to campus what would it be? Please explain.
10. During the Vietnam War what role did Abbas Kessel assume at Mankato State College? It has been said that one person can make a difference in world. Do you think this statement applies to the role Abbas Kessel played at Mankato State College? Why or why not?
11. According to Don Strasser on page 161 who was Mitchell Goodman and how did he get to Mankato State College? What role could a "Chair of Ideas" play on the Minnesota State University, Mankato campus today?
12. According to David Phelps' segment of *Out of Chaos* what role did Mitchell Goodman play in the protests on campus? What was the Mankato community's reaction to Goodman? Why did Goodman meet with President Nickerson on Saturday, May 13, 1972? When Mitchell Goodman left the Mankato State Campus what did he have to say about his time there? Do you think Goodman was treated unfairly at Mankato State College? Why or why not?
13. Dean Doyscher was drafted into the army in September 1966 and served two years in Vietnam. In his entry, Doyscher writes that he thought his "credibility was a real asset to the effort." How did Vietnam veterans bring credibility to the war protest movement? How did veterans of other wars respond to the views expressed by the Vietnam Veterans Against the War? What challenges do you think veterans face on the Minnesota State University,

Mankato campus today?

14. On page 104 Charles Mundale describes a protest action that took place on the intersection of Main Street and Second Street. What action did the students take in the intersection? What did the driver of the truck try to do? Do you think the actions Police Chief Charles Alexander took in response to these events were appropriate? Why or why not?
15. On pages 109 - 111 David Phelps describes the protests that took place on May 9, 1972. How many student protesters marched from campus to down town Mankato? At what time did the students take control of Highway 169? How many students crossed over the Main Street Bridge into North Mankato? What did law enforcement do to keep the students from spreading? At what time was traffic on Highway 169 moving again? Do you agree or disagree with the actions taken by the students to express their opposition to the war? Do you think their actions were effective?
16. On pages 166 and 167 Edger Twedt writes about the "taking over of the bridge." During that event how did the behavior of the Nicolett County Sheriff (George Witty) differ from the Mankato Police Chief Alexander? According to Twedt what was the sergeant from State Patrol doing behind the scenes? Did his actions help or hurt the situation? Please explain.
17. On page 37 what was the attitude of officials, monitors, and others in contact with the demonstrators? Was this approach conventional or unconventional? How did the "Mankato approach" affect the protesters?
18. There were people in Mankato who were not in support of the protest. What are some of the reason townspeople did not support the demonstrations? How do you think local businesses today would react to a protest of 6,000 students in the streets?
19. On page 142 Scott Shrewsbury writes about "outside agitators" and "agent provocateurs" possibly being on the Mankato State campus. What do you think would have been the purpose of outside agitators and agent provocateurs? Who would have benefited from their actions? Do you think protesters today have to contend with outside agitators and agent provocateurs infiltrating their organizations? Why or why not?
20. Students used protest measures to also bring attention to a variety of societal changes. Besides student protests against the war what other protests and conflicts were occurring on the Mankato State campus? What changes did these protests eventually bring to the Mankato State campus?