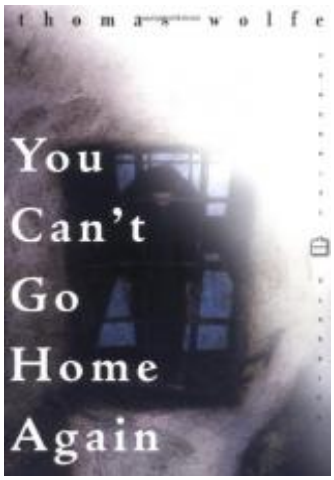
You Can't Go Home Again

by Thomas Wolfe



About the Book

n/a

Discussion Guide

1. Despite George Webber's belief that he was not influenced by his aunt's puritanical, mountain-clan upbringing, what effects do you think her "endless stories of death and sorrow" had on him? How was his character influenced by his father's abandonment of the family for another woman, and by his mother's death from a broken heart?

2.Of George's editor in the novel it is said, "Fox really has no hope that men will change, that life will ever get much better." What of George? Does he have hope? What does he see in the future for himself and America? How does George's attitude evolve over the course of the novel?

3. Discuss the author's use of the metaphor of the honeycomb throughout the novel and what the image symbolizes. Why do you think he says that "it seemed, then, not only entirely reasonable but even natural that the whole structure of society from top to bottom should be honeycombed with privilege and dishonesty?"

4. What does Wolfe mean when he says of Amy Carleton that "she had slept with everybody. . . but she has never been promiscuous?" What does he mean when he says, "She had tried everything in life - except living?"

5. What is it about the party and ensuing fire at the Jacks' the causes George to conclude at the end of Book II that his love for Esther is not enough, that his aspirations for a life of wealth and privilege have been all wrong? Why is it that he concludes that privilege and truth - particularly for a writer - are incompatible? Moreover, is he right?

6. Consider the writing-school dictum of "write what you know" in terms of how it relates to George's - and Wolfe's - novel. Has George taken this advice too literally? Can you think of successful novels that have rung true to you, but

which contained events that could not possibly have been drawn from the author's personal experience?

7. Within the world depicted in the novel, is social class and position more important than ethnic background and nationality in determining character? Is it true that, as Wolfe says, "one tells a good deal more about a man when one says he is a chemist than when one says he is an Englishman?" Would the same hold true today?

8. Is it possible for a person to eradicate his roots, a step that George deems necessary if, as he says, "a man was to win his ultimate freedom and not be plunged back into savagery and perish utterly from the earth?"

Author Bio

Critical Praise

" **You Can't Go Home Again** will stand apart from everything else that he wrote because this is the book of a man who had come to terms with himself, who has something profoundly important to say. "

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