

Who can join a FOM book group ?

Any member can join, as long as their membership fees are paid for the year.

What is the cost ?

It is free of charge. Members are responsible to obtain their own copy of the book however : through library, bookstores, online stores, kindle, audio books.

How many members are there in a group ?

It varies but we find that 6 participants is a minimum to have a fruitful discussion. There is no maximum number although it is best to cap it at 12 people to keep the discussion focused and because some members' home cannot accommodate large numbers. Also, keep in mind FOM members travel throughout the year : it is very rare to have the complete group together at one session

Where do the groups meet ?

We usually meet at the members' homes and it rotates every month.

Does the host have to prepare a meal ?

Not necessarily, especially if the group timings is in the morning or the middle of the afternoon. For sessions taking place during meal time, some groups like it very simple (curry puff or sandwiches with green salad are perfectly acceptable) while others like things more elaborate, with wine and a baked dish. The host should not feel stressed if he/she is not a cook ! The focus is the book.

What happens during a book group session ?

Usually the discussion starts by the main reviewer (who changes each month) giving a brief summary of the book, followed by biographical elements of the author (these are easy to find on internet). The reviewer then throws questions to the audience such as : "Who was your favourite character and why ?" ; "Were you surprised by the end of the story ?" ; "Did the book change your opinion about the country ?" ; etc. Sometimes, the reviewer can share with the group elements from newspaper reviews about the book.

At the end of the session, members vote to rate the book : 1 being the lowest and 5 the highest. Some groups give separate ratings for content and for writing style.

How are books decided ?

This is generally a common decision among the members of the group. Some groups like to plan their whole reading list for the year to come, some groups select books for the next 3 months, some groups decide with only one month notice.

What type of books are reviewed ?

It depends : some groups read non-fiction exclusively, some others only fiction, some others a mix of both genres. What is important is that they should stick to the topic of Asia : either written by an Asian author or written by a non-Asian with setting of the book in Asia. There is a group who selects a specific country and will read 3 books on that country : a historical novel on the 1st month, a contemporary novel on the 2nd month and a non-fiction on the 3rd month for example. Another group likes to alternate classics and contemporary writing.

How often does the group meet ?

We meet once a month at a specific day in the week. Sometimes the groups decide to take a break at Christmas time and July/August because many members are away from Singapore.

A session lasts around 2 hours.

The American Library Association has great tips on book groups here :

<http://libguides.ala.org/bookdiscussiongroups/startguide>