

THE THINGS THAT MATTER MOST

Book Club Questions

1. Has your perception of teachers and the work they do changed since reading this book? What do you understand now about the administrative and emotional loads that teachers carry?

2. In writing *The Things That Matter Most*, author Gabbie Stroud, intended to interrogate the old adage:

It Takes a Village to Raise a Child.

The author asks: 'If it takes a village because it can't just be teachers?' How well has she interrogated this idea?

3. Of the four main voices —Tyson, Sally-Ann, Bev and Derek—who is your favourite? Why?

4. It's easy to dislike the demanding journalist-parent Janet. However, Bev has confronting homophobic thoughts, Tyson engages in a romantic affair with a parent and Derek is not meeting his legal obligations as a teacher. Why is it easy to position Janet as the villain? Do you have any sympathy for her at all?

5. Lionel and Lacey are lovable children facing difficult family circumstances. As readers we are able to piece together their situation more quickly than the teachers in the story. At what point did you feel serious concern for these children and what do you think could have been done for them?

6. The bridge is an integral part of the story creating a physical divide that represents the socio-economic difference in the town. Do such divides exist in your town/ city?

Bev lives on 'the other side' of the bridge – the 'wrong' side – yet Bev says:

People on this side of the bridge didn't need saving. They didn't need a 'beautiful community' tying bears to bridges when it was all too late. They needed a playing field that gave them a fair go – and not that bullshit politicians talked about. They needed people willing to think beyond themselves.

After reading this book, do you feel there are new things we need to consider around closing gaps, supporting those in need and helping vulnerable families?

7. The book is titled: *The Things That Matter Most*. What are the things that should matter most for a teacher? What should matter most for our communities? What matters most for you, personally?

