



Reading between the Lions

The Art Institute's Book Club

www.artic.edu/bookclub

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Catch-22

1. What drew you through the story? Was this a quick read? Why or why not?
2. Did you find the book funny? Which scenes struck you as particularly humorous? How would you describe the type of humor?
3. Is this a book you have encountered before (either in pop culture, through previous reading, or via the film adaptation)? Reflect on your first reading or encounter with the narrative. How did this previous experience differ from your most recent reading of the book?
4. How are war and wartime experience portrayed throughout the book? What assumptions about war underlie the book? Does *Catch-22*'s portrayal of war correspond with or differ from the depiction in the images in *Belligerent Encounters: Graphic Chronicles of War and Revolution, 1500–1945*?
5. Do you feel it's necessary to have experienced wartime personally to empathize with the characters in this story?
6. Did you find this story to be timeless and placeless? Could this be any war, anywhere?
7. How does Heller's novel relate to the images in the exhibition? Are there characters, scenes, or conversations that have parallels to particular works? What works in the exhibition would you assign to illustrate characters in the book?
8. How are women portrayed in the exhibition? How do they compare to the women in the novel?
9. Yossarian is not painted according to the traditional "heroic" picture of a soldier. What do you think of this, especially in light of the book's 1955 publication date?
10. What, if any, parallels do you see between Heller's literary style and the visual style of works in the exhibition?
11. Heller very frequently used plays on words, "catch-22" situations, and tautologies. Why do you think he did this? What does he achieve with this choice?
12. What do you think happened to Yossarian in the end?

Suggested further reading and viewing:

Animal Farm by George Orwell

The Kindly Ones by Jonathan Littell

A Stranger to Myself: The Inhumanity of War: Russia, 1941–1944 by Willy Peter Reese, Stefan Schmitz, Michael Hofmann, and Max Hastings

A firsthand account by a young German soldier on the Eastern front.

K Blows Top: A Cold War Comic Interlude Starring Nikita Krushchev,

America's Most Unlikely Tourist by Peter Carlson

Catch-22 (film) directed by Mike Nichols (1970)