

THE SOUL OF AMERICA: THE BATTLE FOR OUR BETTER ANGELS BY JOHN MEACHAM

02/18/2021

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- In one sentence, what would you say *The Soul of America* is about? What is the purpose of this book? What kind of book is this?
- What is the main focus of *The Soul of America*? What questions is the author trying to answer? Does *The Soul of America* have a central thesis or argument? How are these established by the author? How does this frame the way you approach this book?
- How does *The Soul of America* begin? In a book that spans generations of American history, and is motivated by a white supremacist rally in 2017, why do you think the author chose this moment at the starting point? What do we learn from the focus on Strom Thurmond?
- How does the author structure the information in this book? What are some of the issues that he addresses, both past and present? How does he connect issues in the 21st century to those of the previous centuries? How does Meacham use history in this book?
- What types of evidence does Meacham use throughout *The Soul of America* to support his argument? What kinds of historical events and figures does he focus on? Why do you think he chose those people and moments?
- What did you think of Meacham's approach to history? How does he explain America's history with racism, nationalism, and division? Did you think his approach was substantially nuanced and complex? Which part of his argument and evidence did you find to be the most compelling? Why?
- Why does Meacham think that America's "better angels" ultimately triumph? How does this frame his perspective of modern events in the 21st century? How does this frame his perspective of the years to come?

