

Questions for book clubs reading *What Matters in Mayhew*:

1. What are some of the themes of this story? Is there one in particular that stands out to you?
2. Mayhew Junction is a small town in a rural county where most of the residents have been there all their lives. This situation has consequences that both hinder and help the community as a whole.
 - a. What are the positives and negatives of living in a somewhat isolated community?
 - b. What have been the benefits of this traditional place? How has that traditional approach helped or hindered?
 - c. How do communities function as a unit? What makes it work, or not work?
 - d. What is the balance between progress and tradition? What does it take to upset that balance?
3. Like many small communities, locals often distrust outsiders. What is it like to be an outsider in Mayhew Junction? Who are outsiders in this town?
4. The characters at the round table at the Mayhew Café were meant to be a Greek Chorus type character. In the traditional sense, Greek Choruses provide background, summary or commentary on the play's action. In this case, of course, the chorus often gets it wrong, or at the very least muddies the waters.
 - a. Why do you think the author used this technique, and was it effective?
 - b. What sort of power, if any, does the round table have?
5. Suvi is a strong character and a town legend, almost in a heroic sense. And yet he seems to be stuck in a world between worlds.
 - a. What factors or illustrations make this a true statement?
 - b. Why does he keep his relationship with Beanie a secret?
 - c. What would happen if Suvi bought a house in a white neighborhood?
 - d. What exactly is he afraid of? Is he justified in worrying?
6. Discuss Sweet's refusal to terminate the ectopic pregnancy despite knowing that it was not a viable pregnancy and that it endangered her life.
7. What is Dottie's role and the round table? How and why does it change?
8. LouWanda is a complex and enigmatic character who speaks her mind with very little filtering of content.
 - a. Is LouWanda a racist, or is she just misunderstood? Why?
 - b. When LouWanda gives her pseudo-apology to Suvi and later breaks into tears, why is she crying? Do you feel empathy or compassion for her, or is she getting exactly what she deserves?
9. This story is not about any one character, but about an entire town and how they function together. This made the cast of characters larger than in most novels. How well did you navigate this? Was it difficult as a reader, or was it no more complex than living in your own community with the people you know?
10. What do you think the future holds for Beanie and Will?
11. Why do you think Bubba John was so dead set on surprising his wife with a HOUSE for Christmas? Do you know anyone who might take on such a seemingly insurmountable task?
12. What do you hope happens in the sequel?