

I am open to engaging with any larger book clubs via Zoom, or in person if feasible. (By larger I mean a dozen people or more.) Feel free to drop me a line.

In the meantime, here are some prompts to help stimulate conversation.

1. Neil very intentionally set out to walk a landscape right out his front door, between two of the most heavily trafficked hubs in the country. How did that make the entire story different from, say, a wilderness walk?
2. We all have seams in our lives: when recovering from an illness or moving between houses or between jobs. Have you ever used a life seam to create a more expanded period of freedom and adventure?
3. Very quickly, the encounters Neil has along the way take on the significance of individual parables—like something, he says, out of a holy book. What is it about walking that can give those encounters such a singular weight?
4. What do you make of the difference between honoring history through monuments and statues and attempting instead to honor it by standing in the place where important events happened?
5. Neil talks about the sense of belonging being perhaps the ultimate privilege—that above all, we want to feel that we belong in the place that we are. Is this a feeling that a person can refine and improve over time? Is it up to us to create our own sense of belonging?
6. Neil experiences a mysterious burst of joy while eating fish tacos at a tavern in Maryland, the first of many such moments of rapture along the way. He calls these moments “the reward for being, as though the earth were sending its voltage through us.” Do all of us experience these random moments of sheer delight?
7. A frightening encounter with cancer set the stage for this ramble to New York. What do you make of the idea that a serious health scare can cleanse the eyes and give greater clarity and urgency to one’s days?
8. A third of the way into the walk, a line from St. Paul—“Be not conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind”—provided “a new frame” for the walk. What do you make of the line, and the tension between nonconformity and renewal?

9. Neil talks about “pushing at the matrix” and suggests that we create our own realities as we go. That by entering a room, we alter that room. What do you make of the idea that we are the prime creators of our own reality as we move through life?
10. The obvious question arises: Could anyone who is physically fit take this walk? Could you? Would you want to?
11. Neil often describes the minute details of the spring he watches unfolding around him. Have you ever witnessed the arrival of a spring with a similar focus?
12. The poet Mary Oliver once spoke of attention being the beginning of devotion. Many writers and artists extol the value of deep attentiveness as the best gift we can give back to the world. What do you make of the idea of attentiveness being a gateway to discovery and joy?