Reading together: original reader handbook

Preparing to read together

This handbook is original editorial guidance for readers of Paul Haedo. It contains no book excerpts and is not presented as the author’s personal commentary.

Choose a manageable boundary

Agree on the book, the section to read and a meeting length. A whole book is not required for a useful conversation. Make the boundary explicit before anyone begins discussing discoveries.

Carry a question, not an answer

Before reading, notice which part of the premise or form interests you. Write one question you would like to explore. Leave room for the work to challenge that initial expectation.

Use the website as a companion

Book pages identify the work and available editions. Introductory guides offer themes and questions. Read the source work for its language, narrative and argument; a guide is not a substitute for it.

Explore the current guides: https://paulhaedo.com/explore/

A conversation that leaves room for disagreement

Begin with observations

Invite each participant to share something they noticed. Separate an observation about the text from an interpretation of it. Nobody needs to offer a complete judgment of the book.

Ask what supports an interpretation

When readings differ, ask which features of the work support each view. Participants can identify a scene or passage without reproducing it in a public worksheet. Do not treat one participant's interpretation as the author's declared intention.

Make space for the unfamiliar

A character, narrator or fictional institution may express views that differ from the author's own. The Word of Era and Eranianism are fictional religious lore used to explore villains and oppressive civilizations; their harsh views are not Paul Haedo's personal beliefs.

Finish with a question

End by naming a point to reconsider or a connection to another work. An unresolved question can be a productive result. Avoid pressuring participants to agree, disclose personal experiences or continue past their reading boundary.

Facilitate a spoiler-aware session

Before the meeting

Name the source work, edition where relevant, agreed reading boundary and spoiler policy. Share accessible formats and let participants know they may pass on a question.

During the meeting

Use a short opening round, then two or three questions that fit the actual book. Distinguish premise-level discussion from later plot developments. Pause if the conversation crosses the agreed boundary.

After the meeting

Record the questions the group wants to revisit. Use your own short notes rather than copying long passages. Do not publish private reading notes or another participant’s words without permission.

A simple session outline

Opening: one observation per participant. Discussion: compare two interpretations and their support. Closing: one question for a future reading. Adjust the balance to the group, rather than treating the outline as a rule.

Keep a useful reading record

Before reading

Record what attracted you to the work, the questions raised by its premise and any expectations created by its form.

After your agreed section

Record what changed in your understanding, which question remains open and what you would revisit. Label any note that could reveal a significant development.

Source and uncertainty

Write down the title and edition you actually read. A website guide may refer to an author-supplied version. If something differs, identify the detail to check rather than silently treating the versions as identical.

Book-club guides: https://paulhaedo.com/book-clubs/

Editorial policy: https://paulhaedo.com/editorial-policy/