

Book Group Discussion Questions

The Shift: One Nurse, Twelve Hours, Four Patients' Lives
By Theresa Brown

1. The epigraphs (quotations) at the start of *The Shift* seem to have little to do with the book. Why do you think Theresa included them? Do they connect to the book for you? How?
2. The equation $RN/P=TLIC$ (p. 19 of *The Shift*) suggests that the more patients a nurse has, the less tender-loving-care she is able to give each one. Published research on nurse staffing ratios confirms this and also says that patient mortality rises when nurses have too many patients. Many articles written about nursing during Covid discussed this very problem. How has *The Shift* changed your view of nurses' work and their importance to quality health care?
3. "Home is a vaccine against the stresses of nursing," (p. 3 of *The Shift*). Work stress and the difficulty of work-life balance have been huge topics during the pandemic. Consider a moment of high stress in the book and talk about how and why such events might contribute to burnout among nurses and other hospital workers. Discuss the idea that home can prevent burnout.
4. Chapter 4, "Worries," begins with a clinical patient emergency, often called a "Code." Did the Code proceed as you expected or did aspects of it surprise you? How about compared to the portrayals of such events in TV shows?
5. Patients have so little privacy or autonomy in the hospital. How could that be improved?
6. Candace Moore is a "difficult patient." Other hospital jargon that was left out of *The Shift* includes calling a complicated patient a "train wreck," describing a very sick patient as "circling the drain," and labeling a patient placed on an atypical floor "overflow." How do you feel reading this jargon? What do you think of the label "difficult" as applied to Candace?
7. The possibility of a patient dying is a constant when working on a bone-marrow transplant floor. Discuss what it would be like to have death be a not unexpected part of your job.
8. Page 208-211 retells the strange story of a patient's lost dentures. Discuss this short anecdote and what it reveals about modern health care.

9. Chapter 7, “No Time for Lunch,” shows that nurses are often at risk of hypoglycemia because they do not have time to eat on the job. Twelve hours is also a very long work day. After reading *The Shift*, do you think you could work as a bedside nurse? Did the book give you insight into why so many nurses have quit in response to the pandemic?

10. Read the Ernest Hemingway short story “A Clean, Well-Lighted Place” (you can download it from TheresaBrownRN.com) and talk about whether the phrase is a good description of a hospital and what the story adds to your understanding of *The Shift*.

11. Did you like this book? Why or why not? This may seem basic, but comparing answers is usually very interesting!