



## READING GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

*Before the Empress: Messages from Mount Kilimanjaro* by Michele Mattingly is a great choice for book groups because so many people dream of meeting a big goal or setting off on a grand adventure.

Here are a few questions to get the conversation started:

1. The “bucket list” is pop culture shorthand for “things you want to do before you die.” What is the most audacious item still on your bucket list?
2. Which is more difficult for you? A physical challenge or an emotional challenge?
3. What obstacles are preventing you from pursuing one of your bucket list items? Money? Time? Fear?
4. What Part of the author’s journey resonated with you the most?
5. What personal achievements are you most proud of?
6. What is your life’s purpose? What change do you need to make to fulfill your mission?
7. What would you give to have a deeply personal and transformational spiritual experience?
8. What aspect of the author’s story changed your perspective about Africa or mountain climbing?
9. What one thing will you remember about *Before the Empress: Messages from Mount Kilimanjaro*?
10. Finally, as Ray Bradbury asked in *Dandelion Wine*, how do you know you are *truly* alive?

### Setting the scene for your book group meeting

Carry out your discussion with a bit of African ambiance! Tanzania does have a wine industry, but finding its Chenin Blanc, Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon and Makutupora outside Africa may be difficult. However, BevMo and other retailers do sell wines from South Africa.

Treat your book group to great food. The menu on the climb to Mount Kilimanjaro is nourishing, but not the most exciting cuisine!

If you are member of Spotify or another music-streaming service, look for playlists by searching for “African instrumental background music” or “Tanzania instrumental.” This will set a mood but not compete with your discussion. Of course, “The Lion King” soundtrack might be a nice way to end the meeting.